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OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

PART II

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VOLUME VIII

OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

PART II

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CONTENTS

OUTLINE OF LITERATURE—PART II

PAGE

XVI—The French Novel 11

Prévost — Voltaire — Stendhal — Balzac — Hugo — Dumas—Sand—Flaubert—Maupassant —Zola — Goncourts — Daudet — Huysmans— France—Loti—Rolland—Gide—Proust.

XVII—The Russian Novel 26

Gogol — Goncharov — Turgenev — Dostoievsky — Tolstoy — Gorky — Bunin — Kuprin — Sologub.

XVIII—The Novel in Other European Literatures 34

Goethe — Paul — Keller — Freytag — Sudermann — Mann — Wassermann — Thiess — Feuchtwanger — Couperus — Conscience — Jacobsen — Hamsun — Bremer — Lagerlöf — Undset — Sienkiewicz — Reymont — Foscolo —Manzoni — Verga — Deledda — Pirandello —D'Annunzio — Caballero — Pereda — Valera — Alarcón — Galdós — Bazán — Valdés — Ibáñez — Baroja — Valle-Inclán.

XIX—The Modern Short Story 49

Hoffmann—Grimm Brothers—Andersen—Irving—Poe—Hawthorne—Bret Harte—Mérimée —Maupassant — Chekhov — Gorky —Andreyev — Stevenson — Doyle — Chesterton — Kipling—Barrie—Zangwill—O. Henry—Cobb—Lardner—Mansfield—Anderson.

CONTENTS

PAGE

XX—The Classical Drama 65

Thespis — Phrynichus — Æschylus — Sophocles — Euripides — Aristophanes — Menander —Plautus—Terence—Seneca.

XXI—The Elizabethan Drama 76

The Mystery and Miracle Plays—The Moralities—Udall—*Gammer Gurton's Needle*—Sackville and Norton—Kyd—Lyly—Greene—Marlowe — Shakespeare — Jonson —Beaumont and Fletcher — Chapman — Dekker — Heywood—Middleton—Massinger—Webster.

XXII—The Revival of the Drama in Spain and France 90

Vega — Calderón — Castro — Corneille — Racine — Molière — Voltaire — Lesage — Beaumarchais.

XXIII—The Restoration Drama 96

Dryden — Congreve — Wycherley — Farquhar —Collier.

XXIV—The Drama in the Eighteenth Century 99

Steele—Gay—Goldsmith—Sheridan—Goldoni—Holberg—Lessing—Goethe—Schiller.

XXV—The Drama of the Romantic Revival . 109

Hugo—Kleist—Wagner—Grillparzer—Heiberg —Hertz—Boucicault—Bulwer-Lytton.

XXVI—The Modern Drama 115

Hebbel — Augier — Dumas Fils — Sardou — Ibsen — Björnson — Strindberg — Sudermann —Hauptmann—The German Expressionists—

PAGE

Schnitzler—Hofmannsthal—Capek—Molnar—Chekhov — Andreyev — Maeterlinck — Rostand — Brieux — D'Annunzio — Pirandello —Echergaray — Benavente — Sierra — Gilbert and Sullivan—Pinero—Wilde—Jones—Shaw—Barrie—Galsworthy—Other Contemporary English Dramatists—The Irish Drama—Fitch—O'Neill.

XXVII—Epic and Early Narrative Poetry . . 139

Homer—Virgil—*Beowulf*—Icelandic Eddas—*Nibelungenlied*—*Song of Roland*—*The Cid*—Dante—Marie de France—Chrétien de Troyes—Wolfram von Eschenbach—Gottfried von Strassburg—*Gawain and the Green Knight*—Chaucer — Gower — Langland — Ballads — Ariosto — Tasso — Camoens — Spenser — Milton—Klopstock—Mock Epics.

XXVIII—Didactic and Satirical Poetry . . . 161

Æsop—Fabliaux—La Fontaine—Hesiod—Lucretius—Cynewulf—*Roman de la Rose*—Martial — Juvenal — Dryden — Pope — Goldsmith —Parini.

XXIX—Lyrical and Pastoral Poetry . . . 171

Alcæus — Sappho — Anacreon — Simonides—Bacchylides — Pindar — Theocritus — Greek Anthology — Virgil — Catullus — Horace — Ovid — Old English Lyrics — Troubadours — Walter von der Vogelweide—Petrarch—Villon —Marot — Ronsard — du Bellay — Malherbe —Chénier — Boscan — Garcilasso — Góngora —Wyatt — Surrey — Sidney — Spenser — Shakespeare — Elizabethan Lyrics and Seventeenth-Century Lyrics — Milton — Vondel — Thomson — Gray — Collins — Cowper —

CONTENTS

PAGE

Crabbe — Blake — Burns — Herder — Goethe—Schiller.

XXX—The Romantic Revival 194

Wordsworth — Coleridge — Scott — Byron—Shelley — Keats — Poe — Béranger — Lamartine — Vigny — Hugo — Gautier —Musset — Baudelaire — Leopardi — Uhland — Heine — Oehlenschläger — Tegnér — Runeberg — Mickiewicz — Pushkin — Lermontov.

XXXI—Poetry of the Last Half of the Nineteenth Century 208

Tennyson — Browning — Mrs. Browning — Rossetti — Arnold — FitgGerald — Morris — Swinburne — Longfellow — Lowell — Whittier — Holmes — Whitman — Lanier — Mallarmé — Verlaine — Rimbaud — Carducci —Drachmann.

XXXII—Contemporary Poetry 223

Hardy—Masefield—Noyes—Yeats—de la Mare —Other English Poets — Robinson — Frost — Amy Lowell—Fletcher—Masters—Sandburg—Lindsay—Younger American Poets—Régnier — Verhaeren — Fort — Claudel — Valéry — Pascoli — Jimenez — Block — Spitteler.

XXXIII—Eastern Literature 235

Jewish—Arabic—Persian—Sanskrit and Hindu —Chinese—Japanese.

Bibliography 243

OUTLINE OF LITERATURE

PART II

XVI

THE FRENCH NOVEL

TEN years before the publication of Richardson's *Pamela,* l'Abbé Prévost had written his pathetic story of the love of Manon Lescaut for the Chevalier des Grieux. If the plot of *Manon Lescaut* were a little more closely constructed, Prévost might be considered the father of the modern novel rather than Richardson. The simplicity, charm, and devotion of Manon have won the admiration of many famous novelists and critics and have still an appeal after two centuries through the operas of Massenet and Puccini. Prévost also translated into French the novels of Richardson, which received an even more enthusiastic reception on the Continent than in England.

The philosophic tale was almost as popular in France as the sentimental romance. Voltaire used this form to ridicule the superstitions and fallacies of his day. Most of his tales have an Oriental setting, because Voltaire had

learned the danger of being too outspoken. In his youth he had been twice imprisoned in the Bastile, and during his whole life he was forced to live in exile for long periods. His mockery, his wit, and his rapid prose style reached their highest point in *Candide,* an account of the misfortunes befalling Candide from his capture by the Bulgarians to his decision to settle upon a farm in Turkey. Voltaire wrote this story to attack the current theory that "all is for the best in this best of all possible worlds." The advocate of this optimistic philosophy is Pangloss, a professor of metaphysico-theologico-cosmolo-nigology. When he tries to prove to Candide at the end of the story that all his misfortunes were for the best, Candide dismisses the subject with the remark, "All that is very well, but let us cultivate our garden."

Voltaire fought for intellectual freedom and the right of the individual to express his own ideas. Besides the tales, he wrote poetry, tragedies, comedies, histories, criticism, and philosophy—in all nearly one hundred volumes—but his literary reputation rests upon the clever satires, *Candide* and *Zadig.*

The freedom which was defended so ardently by the eighteenth-century philosophers was the theme of the novels of Henri Beyle, who wrote under the name of Stendhal. He realized that his subjective attitude and his psychological

method would be appreciated better by posterity than by his contemporaries, for he said, "I shall be understood about 1880." Another date he set was 1935. The present revival of interest in *Le Rouge et Le Noir, La Chartreuse de Parme,* and the *Vie d'Henri Brulard* justifies his prophecy. He is distinctly modern in his analysis of motives for actions and in his endeavor "to tell truthfully and clearly what takes place in my heart."

For the scope of his work and the variety of his characters, taken from all stations in life, Honoré de Balzac is the most remarkable of the French novelists who wrote in the nineteenth century. The novels portraying Parisians, peasants, and provincials he called as a whole *The Human Comedy.* Altho he analyzed the motives of persons from all classes, he was at his best in his studies of greed and selfishness. As he wandered about the streets and suburbs of Paris or walked along country roads during his visits to the provinces, he stored his memory with incidents to be used later. From his early years he had confidence in his ability to write and was not discouraged by failure or hardships. Adverse criticism seemed to spur him to renewed efforts in another direction. At last he found his field in the creation of the types of the human comedy. The creative impulse was so strong in him that he worked at a feverish pace,

producing novels at the rate of four a year. He was not, however, a careless worker, for he even made revisions on the proof-sheets in his endeavor to perfect his style.

Always in need of money, Balzac entered upon several business ventures, which brought him nothing but more debts. When he was most successful as a novelist, he never made enough money to satisfy his extravagant tastes. He craved publicity and sought it in the most expensive society. He was seldom free from an entangling love affair. All these experiences in the business and social world gave him material for the vast amount of realistic detail in his novels. Not only did he have an understanding of people of all ages and all sorts, but he also had a sense of background as keen as that of Scott. *Eugénie Grandet, Père Goriot,* and *Seraphita* are perhaps the most characteristic examples of Balzac's method and style. It is to be regretted that he did not live to carry out his plan to make a complete analysis of human character.

Outside of France, Victor Hugo has been more widely read than Balzac, altho he is not such a powerful writer. For almost half a century he was the leader of the romantic school. During the Second Empire he was banished for his political views and went to live in Guernsey and later in Brussels. This exile increased his fame, because

it made him a martyr in the eyes of his followers. It is more important, however, in its influence upon his novels. During this period Hugo came to know the sufferings and sacrifices of the poor, who were his neighbors. He sympathized with them and admired them for their willingness to help each other in times of trouble.

He wrote his novels to call attention to the social conditions which were producing criminals and to the inhuman treatment which was destroying every vestige of humanity in the condemned. *Les Misérables* pictures in a series of dramatic scenes the lives of the unfortunate and wretched. The career of Jean Valjean, pursued relentlessly by the police because he was once convicted of a minor crime, forms the central theme of this comprehensive novel. Hugo stated in one sentence the theory upon which he developed the character of Jean Valjean: "Is there not in every human soul a primitive spark, a divine element incorruptible in this world, immortal in the next, which can be developed by good, kindled, lit up, and made resplendently radiant, and which evil can never entirely extinguish?"

Some incidents in *Notre Dame de Paris* and the *Toilers of the Sea* are even more melodramatic than those in *Les Misérables*. Whoever has seen the motion picture, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame,* will never forget the fiendish activ-

ity of Quasimodo. In spite of his unevenness and extravagance, Hugo has given us magnificent historical scenes reflecting the attitude of the times. His chief faults are his lack of humor and his lack of a sense of proportion. His novels are filled with digressions and improbabilities, but they seldom bore the reader, who feels that he is witnessing the action so vividly described.

Alexandre Dumas treated history with even more freedom in his romances about brave soldiers and fair ladies. The result, however, has gratified every lover of the story of adventure, regardless of the remarks made by critics concerning his methods of composition. For Dumas the production of books was a most successful occupation financially. He sketched the plots, employed assistants to do the actual writing, and then revised the product. He was even accused of not having read some of his works. Yet it was his imagination which conceived D'Artagnan, Porthos, Athos, and Aramis, and his fertile brain which provided for the dauntless trio of *The Three Musketeers* their exciting escapades. Hardly less engrossing are *The Count of Monte Cristo, The Viscount de Bragelonne,* and the numerous other novels from the pen of this unequaled master of the novel of incident. His resources of invention seem inexhaustible. In the Valois romances the young and valiant heroes are often betrayed by the intrigues of

the unscrupulous, who hesitate at no villainy. Their escapes are as miraculous and their devotion as remarkable as those of the heroes in the dime novels. Dumas, however, has managed to make not only his exaggerated plots but also his romantic characters credible. His joy in an active, bustling life he has imparted to his novels. They may be formless in construction; they may show evidence of careless composition; their nobles and soldiers may never have existed in any century; but they will never cease to afford enjoyment to those who still retain the adventurous spirit of youth.

To find romance George Sand did not need to go to the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. Her own love affairs furnished her with ample material for her many novels. As soon as she discovered the natural tendencies of her dissipated husband, Baron Dudevant, she left him and established herself in Paris. Disregarding the conventions of the day, she dressed as a man, smoked a Turkish pipe, and collected lovers, for she was the advocate of a life of freedom for women in every sphere. She sought love in a series of affairs, the most famous of which were with de Musset and Chopin. She was also dominated by her devotion to her children. When the two passions conflicted, her maternal love proved to be the stronger. To de Musset she wrote, when she realized that their affair was

over: "If it were not for my children, I would willingly throw myself into the river." Finally she retired to a more peaceful life in the country, where she took a sympathetic interest in the joys and sorrows of the peasants.

George Sand's novels reflect the emotions of the period in which they were written. The early ones, like *Indiana,* defend the right to love. The second group, of which *Consuelo* is typical, deal with social problems. The novels of the last period, however, are her best work, because they seek to establish no theories. *The Little Fadette* and *François the Waif* are pleasing stories of country life. She wrote with careless ease and refused to take her art too seriously. For her the novel was a means of expressing her emotions and recording her personality.

In one of her letters to Gustave Flaubert she wrote: "How you torment yourself, and how you disturb yourself about life!" His pessimism at the imbecility of humanity not only made him unhappy but also colored his work. He hated his time and treated it with ironic satire. Flaubert was an objective writer, finding in minor, commonplace incidents enormous significance. In fact, *L'Education Sentimentale* is almost wholly composed of such incidents. He had a tendency to describe with fulness of detail the horrible, as in the scene depicting Emma Bovary's death. *Madame Bovary* is the story of a

romantic woman who endeavors to escape from the dulness of her marriage to a provincial doctor by taking any available man as a lover. Flaubert applied his realistic method of description to the past in *Salammbô* and *The Temptation of Saint Anthony*. For these novels he read widely and collected a mass of information.

Flaubert labored as tirelessly in the composition of his novels as in the gathering of material. He strove for perfection, spending hours in his search for the right word. The result of this labor was a style so precise and clear that the reader feels "almost materially the things he reproduces."

The disciple whom Flaubert trained in the powers of observation and care in style is Guy de Maupassant. His reputation as a writer of short stories is so great that many do not remember that he also wrote several novels. *Une Vie, Bel Ami, Pierre et Jean,* and *Fort comme la Mort* are psychological studies of persons suffering from their surroundings. Often Maupassant is cynical and bitter in his treatment, but he strives to present truth by the selection of the significant details.

In his theory concerning the novelist's privilege of selection Maupassant differs from Zola, the champion of the experimental novel. Like a physician noting every symptom of a disease,

Zola investigated every detail of the ills of society. These ills he exposed in all their disgusting sordidness, so that his critics accused him of want of taste and vulgarity of subject and style. He answered those who protested against his obscenity by the statement, "I have simply done on living bodies the analytical work surgeons do on corpses."

The Rougon-Macquart series, consisting of some twenty novels, shows how heredity and environment affected the branches of a family through several generations. As the members occupied various social positions and engaged in different occupations, Zola has told the story of society in the Second Empire. Drinking shops, markets, flats, railway stations, miners' hovels, and peasants' cottages are the settings for these studies, as well as the dressing-rooms of theaters and the drawing-rooms of society. In spite of some powerful scenes, every novel has tiresome chapters because of the excess of detail and the overemphasis placed upon the scientific method.

The Goncourts were also leaders of the naturalistic school. They wished to give in their novels as accurately as possible their impressions and their observations of real life. Therefore, they announced that the plot was secondary, while clinical studies were to have their chief attention. That theory explains why most of their novels have never had a large audience. ***Renée***

Mauperin and *Manette Salomon* have, however, sufficiently dramatic plots and attractive heroines to overcome the effects of the Goncourts' theories.

Altho Alphonse Daudet accepted these theories to the extent of taking "notes from life," he did not carry them to the extreme. He sympathized with the people he portrayed in his novels, particularly the poor and unhappy. Because of this quality and his humor he has been called the Dickens of France. *Le Petit Chose* resembles *David Copperfield* and *Tartarin de Tarascon* has the comic tone of the *Pickwick Papers.* His Tartarin is the great hero of his native Provence, which Daudet loved so well. His novels concerning Parisian life are more studied and artificial, with the exception of *Sappho,* a tragic story of modern love. His finest work is characterized by tender feeling without a trace of sentimentality.

Another follower of the Goncourts was J. K. Huysmans, who admired particularly their style. His own style is highly imaginative and carefully adapted to the substance of the paragraph. His pessimistic view is even deeper than Zola's. *En Ménage,* the story of the amorous experiences of a painter and a poet, ends on a note of disillusionment. *A Rebours* substitutes "the dream of reality for reality itself." Finally, Huysmans

turned to Catholicism and in *La Cathédrale* wrote a novel of religious symbolism.

Altho Anatole France saw as clearly as the naturalists the faults of civilization, he treated them with ironic laughter rather than with pessimistic despair. He was essentially a skeptic amused in a philosophical manner by what he observed. Before he ventured into the field of fiction, he had written history and criticism. Evidences of this critical and scholarly attitude are present in all his works. In *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard,* for example, the characters indulge in long conversations upon a variety of subjects. His people are too erudite to be entirely convincing. *Thaïs* is an exposition of the conflict between the philosophies of the ancient world and Christianity. The eighteenth century is the setting for *La Rotisserie de la Reine Pédauque* with its witty hero, Abbé Jérôme Coignard, while the whole of civilization is the subject for satire in *L'Ile des Pingouins* and *La Revolt des Anges.* In a brilliant yet precise and simple style Anatole France launches his ironic attacks, for he is a master of those qualities which distinguish the best French style.

Pierre Loti also gained renown through his style, which reproduced so effectively the impressions made upon him during his voyages as a naval officer. The mystery of the sea and tropical lands pervades his novels. His charac-

ters are rather vague types, remembered more for their effect upon the feelings of the author than for themselves. *Le Mariage de Loti* and *Madame Chrysanthème* reveal the charm of the author's personality perhaps as well as any of his works.

Of the French novelists, the major portion of whose work has been published since 1900, we shall consider only Romain Rolland, André Gide, and Marcel Proust. Others have done work of merit and have acquired some recognition outside of France, but they have not received the attention given these three. Rolland's long novel, *Jean-Christophe,* traces the career of a musician from his birth in Germany to his death in Paris. Since he has always been a student of music, Rolland has excellently portrayed the peculiarities of the musician's temperament. Jean-Christophe at last wins approval for his compositions, but in his success assumes toward the younger men the same attitude which his predecessors had had toward him. He is self-centered, sacrificing every one to his genius. Rolland has concentrated his efforts upon his hero, with the result that his other characters, particularly the women, are unconvincing. The novel is, however, a résumé of intellectual Europe before the war. The moralist in Rolland is even more evident in *Clérambault,* a "story of a free conscience during the war." The hero lacks the living personality of Jean-

Christophe, for he is the expounder of the author's ideas. Like Tolstoy, whose life he wrote, Rolland believes that the world needs a revival of the heroic spirit.

A critic of contemporary French literature calls Gide "the foremost prose-writer of his generation." In his style Gide is a classicist, following the tradition of restraint and refinement. Under the influence of Dostoievsky he has shown the efforts of sinning human beings to discover God. He is also concerned with the problems of modern youth in the endeavor to understand life. He has tried to help young people to find answers to some of the baffling questions of adolescence. *The Return of the Prodigal Son* and *The Counterfeiters* are the best examples of these aspects of Gide's work and of his ability as a writer.

In the sixteen volumes of the *Remembrance of Things Past,* Marcel Proust reviews modern society through the observations of a sensitive young writer. The novel is a psychological study of an introspective youth. The hero ponders over his emotional reactions to his experiences from his boyhood days and philosophizes interminably upon ideas suggested by his view of the life about him. In some respects Proust is more of an essayist than a novelist, for his narrative moves very slowly. These characteristics, together with his involved sentence structure and

elaborately developed metaphors, will prevent his work from being widely read in spite of its excellently drawn characters. Whatever the future judgment of *The Remembrance of Things Past* may be, it is surely the most comprehensive novel of contemporary French literature.

Many of the novels which have been awarded the various French literary prizes have been translated into English and hailed as exceptional work. Their permanent value, however, is difficult to determine. The present reception may be due more to the treatment of new subjects and the studies of abnormal psychology than to their inherent worth. The young French writers are experimenting with the form of the novel in their endeavor to be true to life. They are so concerned with ideas and impressions that they confuse the threads of their stories. Perhaps they will yet evolve a form eminently fitted for the interpretation of contemporary French ideas.

XVII

THE RUSSIAN NOVEL

WITHIN the last fifty years English and French readers have become more and more aware of the importance of the Russian novel. Not long ago John Galsworthy included five Russian novels in his list of the twelve best works of fiction. The admiration for Tolstoy has also done much to direct attention to Russian fiction. Furthermore, the uncompromising realism and the dramatic power of the Russian novel have exerted an appeal in this age of frankness. The Russian novelists have faced life unhesitatingly, and altho they have found little beauty in the drabness of ordinary existence, they have revealed the universal motives and conflicts which prevent the majority of mankind from reaching a higher level.

Nikolay Gogol, "the father of the Russian novel," began his literary work with romantic tales of his native Ukraine, entitled *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka*. Cossack life was also the inspiration for *Taras Bulba* with its humorous pictures of the farm and army. But Gogol's observation of the inefficiency and the corruption in the civil service, where he had been a minor official, aroused his indignation. Thus he

began to satirize the Russian imperial system. His short story, *The Cloak,* was the first masterpiece of Russian realism and the inspiration for his successors. "We have all," said Dostoievsky "issued from Gogol's *Cloak.*"

In 1842 Gogol published the first part of *Dead Souls,* the story of the enormous swindle conceived by Chichikov, a dismissed customs official. This rogue obtained loans from a bank on the names of serfs who had died since the last census. He could buy the names from landlords for an insignificant sum because these landlords had to pay the tax upon them until the next census. Chichikov's journeys throughout Russia on his quest for dead souls and his dealings with various types of landlords offered Gogol an opportunity not only for satire but also for humor. His attitude of sympathy for the serfs, his treatment of character, and his method of telling the story show the results of his study of Cervantes and Dickens.

If in Gogol's delineation of character we notice traces of Dickens's tendency to caricature, we are impressed with the naturalness of the characters in the novels of Ivan Goncharov and Ivan Turgenev. Goncharov belonged to the town, while Turgenev was a member of the country nobility. Each shows the typical Russian in the environment with which he was acquainted. Goncharov's *Oblomov* is a study of a Russian gentle-

man who refuses to leave his sofa for active participation in life. Oblomov is the incarnation of inertia in the Russian temperament of the period before the emancipation of the serfs.

Turgenev vowed to fight for this emancipation. On account of the strictness of the censorship he was forced to use an indirect method. In his *Sketches of a Sportsman* he aroused pity for the peasants by describing the conditions under which they lived. After the emancipation he portrayed the hero of the younger generation, who rebelled against authority in his desire for individual development. To this type he gave the name of Nihilist. The conflict between the individualist and the advocate of obedience to authority is the theme of *Fathers and Sons.* Turgenev was as successful in depicting feminine character as he was in drawing the young Russian intellectual. His women have been described as "less intelligent than a man, but more decided." At any rate, they are usually charming.

Turgenev's education in Germany and long residence in Paris made him more European than most of the Russian novelists. He spoke of George Sand as "one of my saints." The influence of the French novelists is evident in his mastery of form and precision of style. Russian critics praise very highly the beauty of his prose. If he had written only *A Lear of the*

Steppes, Smoke, and *Torrents of Spring,* he would have been recognized as a great artist.

Turgenev once told Feodor Dostoievsky that he regarded himself as a German and that he was settled definitely in Baden-Baden. The younger novelist's devotion to Russia was, on the other hand, confirmed by his travels in Europe. He was thoroughly imbued with the national traits and had supreme faith in the Russian peasant. When a publisher read Dostoievsky's story, *Poor Folks,* he remarked, "Let me announce the appearance of a new Gogol."

Dostoievsky's sympathy for the poor folk nearly caused his death, for in 1849 he was condemned to be shot for the expression of his political views. Pardoned at the last minute, he was sent to Siberia for four years. *Memories of the House of the Dead* is the record of this period. This novel contains also his theory of the power of expiation, which was to be further developed in *Crime and Punishment.* Raskolnikov, a poor student, murders a pawn-broker because he feels that life has been unjust to him. He is tortured by the preying of the crime upon his mind and finally confesses to Sonia, who advises him to expiate his crime by giving himself up to the police and going to Siberia. He is redeemed through the love of this girl of the streets. The conflicts in the soul of Raskolnikov are symbolic of the conflicts in the Russian soul

and in the European soul. These also can be ended only by "a brotherly love for all men's brothers." This belief Dostoievsky announced in a speech in memory of Pushkin.

The Brothers Karamazov is a complete analysis of the various aspects of the Russian soul as revealed in the different persons of the novel. The story revolves around the sinner Dmitri and the saint Alyosha. Dostoievsky seems to be continually asking himself, What do these people think and feel about the events of their lives and the persons with whom they come into contact? Is there any escape from the dissatisfaction with life? His answer is that the sensual and selfish nature of man must be conquered by the spirit of forgiveness and love.

Tolstoy taught the same lesson of unselfishness and the brotherhood of man in his later writings. Two short stories, "God Sees the Truth, but Waits" and "Where Love Is, There God Is Also," give the essence of his creed, derived from the parables of the Gospels. *Resurrection* preaches the doctrine of non-resistance and illustrates the practical application of the Tolstoyan creed. Tolstoy's friends thought that his preoccupation with social and moral reforms was depriving Russian literature of a great creative writer. Turgenev voiced their plea when he wrote from his death-bed: "Great master of our Russian tongue, come back to your literary

labors." During the next twenty-five years, however, Tolstoy became more and more the moral philosopher seeking perfection, even to his last hours in a small railway station as he was on his way to a monastery.

The Tolstoy of this last period appears to be far different from the youth of the *Diaries,* but there is no real inconsistency in his character. From his university days he was dissatisfied with the frivolous life of the Russian nobility and was examining rationally the problem of a satisfactory philosophy. This questioning of life runs through the *Sebastopol* stories. The first solution drawn from his experiences in the Caucasus was that one should accept life as it came and "should live so as to have the best for oneself and one's family." This view is the philosophy of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karénina.* In these works natural man is contrasted with man in a state of sophisticated civilization. They are novels of moral rather than social conflicts. The characters are revealed by the method of psychological analysis and the presentation of an enormous amount of personal detail to bring out dominating traits. They are more real than most of the persons we meet in fiction, because they experience the ordinary trifling annoyances and because they speak in a language colloquial to their class. This attention to character caused Tolstoy to neglect the narrative move-

ment in his novels. Consequently some incidents have no essential bearing on the story.

The fatalistic theory is the keynote of *War and Peace,* a long novel concerning Napoleon's campaign in Russia. Although Tolstoy distorts historical events to fit his theory, he paints an impressive background. Anna Karénina is also the victim of the fatal consequences following her decision to leave her husband for the brilliant Vronsky. In contrast to their story, Tolstoy pictures the happiness of Levin and Kitty. The idea which Tolstoy wished to convey in *Anna Karénina* is that kindness and consideration for the others, no matter what their station in life, are more admirable characteristics than intellectual ability accompanied by vanity. Here is the germ of his later teaching—that "truth is to be found in working like a peasant."

When Tolstoy died in 1910, he had been long recognized as the greatest figure in Russian literature. In honor of the centenary of his birth, a new edition of his complete works in ninety volumes is being prepared. This edition will contain some ten thousand pages of hitherto unpublished material, largely from the diaries and letters. From this material we may expect to obtain a complete understanding of the most influential writer of his generation.

Many novels of revolutionary Russia have been merely political propaganda or expressions

of the radical ideas of the Intelligentsia. A few, however, have interpreted the spirit of the new régime. Gorky's *Forma Gordeev, The Mother,* and *Decadence* emphasize the degradation and ignorance of provincial life with all his customary bitterness. Bunin also aimed to show the peasant as he really was. *The Village* is a powerful but depressing picture of poverty and brutality. The effect wrought by the coarseness of the army upon a sensitive young officer is the subject of Kuprin's *The Duel,* which was received as an attack upon the Imperial Army. The chief representative of the symbolists is Sologub, whose *The Little Demon* a Russian critic has called "the most perfect Russian novel since the death of Dostoievsky." In this novel Peredonov represents evil and hatred rejoicing in miseries of others. The future of the Russian novel is at present in the hands of the censorship of the Communist Party. What its course may be, none can tell.

XVIII

THE NOVEL IN OTHER EUROPEAN LITERATURES

Comparatively few novelists of other European literatures than French and Russian have been widely read outside their own countries. Their works have been known chiefly to students of European literature, who have sometimes overrated the worth of a novel in their enthusiasm. Occasionally a book like *Quo Vadis* has become extremely popular because of some particular appeal. Within the last twenty-five years, however, translations of novels from these literatures have become more numerous. To some extent the awards of the Nobel prize have directed attention to contemporary novelists, as the reading public has wished to discover the reason for the award.

The first novel in German literature to secure an international reputation for its author was Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther,* a sentimental romance, somewhat in the manner of Richardson. Goethe's passion for Charlotte Buff, the fiancée of his friend Kestner, and the suicide of an acquaintance on account of hopeless love furnished the basis for this pathetic story. The idealistic pictures of family life show the influ-

ence of Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield.* All over Europe young men admired Werther, imitated him in dress and manners, wept at his sufferings, and even shot themselves in despair when they deemed their love unrequited.

To the composition of the first part of *Wilhelm Meister* Goethe devoted almost twenty years. The hero changes from a weak idealist absorbed by his interest in the theater to a sincere seeker after the realities of life. This change was produced by his learning the story of the charming Mignon and the old harper, perhaps the most appealing characters Goethe ever created. The second part of *Wilhelm Meister,* published twenty-five years later, contains some excellent writing, but lacks coherent development. *Elective Affinities,* inspired by another of Goethe's love affairs, is a psychological study, showing the effect of too constant companionship upon four persons, two married and two single. It is a warning against the inevitable consequences of such association.

The numerous imitations of Goethe's novels lack the sincerity of feeling which made the originals great works. They are usually excessively sentimental in their presentation of a romantic hero. It is hard for a modern reader to understand the popularity of Jean Paul's (Johann Paul Friedrich Richter's) *Titan* or the appeal of his humor for Carlyle. One of the last

and best examples of this autobiographical type of novel so dear to the romanticists is Gottfried Keller's *The Green Henry*, tracing his own spiritual development. His short stories about Swiss life are, however, much more enjoyable reading, as he has preserved the customs of his country.

During the last half of the nineteenth century the German novel was at a low ebb. Between 1872 and 1880 Gustav Freytag wrote a group of historical novels, entitled collectively *The Ancestors*. He tried to awake a spirit of nationalism by recounting in these books glorious incidents from Germany's past, for this was the period when the various German states were being formed into the present German nation. The transition was not particularly favorable to the novel. But the unwieldy nature of German prose delayed its development even more. Mark Twain ridiculed the construction of the German sentence by a very apt anecdote. One day he was reading a continued story in a German paper. He came to the end of the instalment only to find that the verb was in the section to be printed the next day. Fortunately, Nietzsche was proving that German prose could be written in a lucid and simple manner.

Among the contemporary writers in Germany, Herman Sudermann, Thomas Mann, Jacob Wassermann, Frank Thiess, and Lion Feuchtwanger

have achieved success in the field of fiction, both at home and abroad. Altho Sudermann is known primarily as a dramatist, he has written some good novels and short stories. *Dame Care* is the story of a youth beset by poverty and misfortune. In *The Song of Songs* he shows in detail the gradual degeneration of a weak-willed woman. The stories in *The Indian Lily and Other Stories* are also studies of character. *The Mad Professor,* recently published, gives further evidence of Sudermann's training as a dramatist.

Thomas Mann writes in a serious and philosophical vein about the disappointments and sorrows of life. For that reason his longer novels, *Buddenbrooks* and *The Magic Mountain,* become somewhat monotonous reading. He is too much a novelist of ideas. In his short stories, such as "Death in Venice" and "Disorder and Early Sorrow," he does not have the opportunity to yield so fully to these tendencies. Their melancholy is less emphasized, while their sympathetic tenderness is not overshadowed by lengthy discussions.

The World's Illusion established the reputation of Jacob Wassermann as one of the outstanding novelists of this generation. Wassermann is a seeker for truth, having a prophetic vision. He is greatly interested in the causes and effects of human relationships. His last novel, *The Maurizius Case,* deals with efforts of

a sixteen-year-old boy to establish the fact that his father sentenced an innocent man to prison.

The attitude of the youth of the post-war generation in Germany is the subject of a tetralogy by Frank Thiess. Two parts, *The Fool's Paradise* and *The Gateway to Life,* have been translated into English. They reveal Thiess as a novelist of surprizing vigor. He understands clearly the eternal problems of adolescence. Wolf Brassen, the chief character of the novel, is the representative of the modern youth questioning the adequacy of his education to help him find himself.

The advantages which an enterprising, wealthy Jew gained from the political intrigues carried on by the German states in the eighteenth century form the theme of Feuchtwanger's *Power.* As the princes were always in need of money, Süss could enforce his demands. Yet he finally discovered that money was not an all-protective power. For the story and background of *The Ugly Duchess,* Feuchtwanger went to the Middle Ages. The novel is an amazing picture of the sordidness, immorality, and barbarity of the period. Not a single character is attractive, while the antics of the duchess are at times distinctly grotesque.

Judging from the ability and promise of the younger writers, it seems as tho the German novel were entering upon the period of its greatest development. Definitely freed from the

sentimental tradition of Goethe and the heavy style of the older novel, these writers have brought new vigor to their work.

Dutch literature and Flemish literature have each had one novelist important in European literature. Louis Couperus was the most prominent literary man in modern Holland. His tetralogy, *The Books of Small Souls,* is his most ambitious work. Hendrik Conscience wrote stories of Flemish life with the purpose of keeping alive the language, which was being superseded by French, the official language of Belgium.

Not until the present century have novels by Scandinavian writers been translated to any great extent. In the previous century a few writers had, however, an important influence upon the prose of their literatures. The Danish novelist Jons Jacobsen was a disciple of Flaubert and Turgenev in the attention he gave to exact expression. His *Niels Lyhne,* entitled *Siren Voices* in the English translation, was praised by such discriminating critics as Brandes and Saintsbury. In 1917 the Nobel Prize for Literature was divided between two Danish novelists, Karl Gjellerup and Pontoppidan, who has written a powerful novel about country folk.

The struggles of ordinary people have also been the subjects of the best-known Norwegian

and Swedish novels. Among these are Jonas Lie's *The Pilot and His Wife, The Life Prisoner,* reminiscent of Dostoievsky's *Crime and Punishment,* and *The Family at Gilje;* Björnson's *The Heritage of the Kurts* and his short stories; Garborg's *Tired Men;* and Strindberg's *The Red Room.* Knut Hamsun's *Growth of the Soil* and *Hunger* have had a greater popularity with foreign readers than any other Scandinavian novels. He pictures clearly and bitterly the hardships suffered by primitive natures and often adds a touch of irony. Another aspect of his writing, the presentation of various moods, dominates such books as *Pan* and *Mysteries.* In these works he is akin to the introspective novelists.

Three women have also had an important part in Scandinavian fiction, two of them being recipients of the Nobel prize. Frederika Bremer was a romanticist, who wrote during the first half of the nineteenth century. *The H. Family* and *Sketches of Every-day Life* are known to English readers by the translations of Mary Howitt. Like George Sand, she was an ardent advocate for the rights of women.

Selma Lagerlöf's *The Story of Gösta Berling* relates the incidents in the career of a kindly Swedish clergyman who was unfrocked because of his one failing—drunkenness. Her stories for

children have delighted many adults as well as young people.

In 1928 the Nobel Prize winner was Sigrid Undset, who has recreated Scandinavia of the past in *Kristin Lavransdatter* and *The Master of Hestviken*. By her analysis of the emotions of her historical characters she has presented them as living personalities. Her studies with her father, a Norwegian archeologist, have made her as familiar with the life of the Middle Ages as tho she had participated in it. This knowledge accounts for the realistic background in her novels.

The Polish novelist, Henry Sienkiewicz, on the other hand, treated history from the romantic point of view. *Quo Vadis?* is a dramatic account of the struggle between Christianity and Roman Imperialism in the reign of Nero. In spite of his exaggerations he has caught very well the spirit of the period. *Fire and Sword, The Flood,* and *Mr. Valodovski* deal with heroic struggles in Polish history.

A year in the life of a family of Polish peasants is depicted in the four volumes of Ladislas Reymont's *The Peasants*. It is a rather grim picture, occasionally brightened by a pleasing incident. Hard work and strong passions are the dominant factors. Reymont knew and loved the peasants and has given a faithful record of their feelings. In an earlier work, *The Promised Land,* he showed the effects of industrialism upon the

society of a Polish city. As he believed materialism was destroying the soul of his people, he emphasized the degrading influences brought by the desire for wealth. *The Promised Land* is not so convincing or so impressive as *The Peasants* because Reymont did not sympathize with the aims of the characters.

In Italy the novel also came under the influence of Goethe's *Werther*. The Italian *Werther* was *Jacopo Ortis* by Ugo Foscolo. Besides the sentimental scenes among the Euganean hills, the book contains descriptions of Italy's sufferings under the Austrian oppression. In 1815 Foscolo went to England, where he lived for a number of years. He contributed articles on the Italian authors of the Renaissance to the *Quarterly Review* and translated Sterne's *Sentimental Journey* into his native language.

The leader of the romantic school of fiction in Italy was Alessandro Manzoni. His historical novel of the seventeenth century, *The Betrothed*, was praised by Goethe and Scott. The deep feeling and the fine style of this novel have kept the name of Manzoni alive long after his tragedies have been forgotten. But even should *The Betrothed* be no longer read, Manzoni would be remembered because Verdi composed the famous *Requiem* in his honor.

Another novelist whose name is connected with a famous musical composition is Giovanni Verga.

The first story in his *Cavalleria Rusticana* furnished the libretto for Mascagni's opera. Verga wrote about the peasant life of his native Sicily. In 1925 D. H. Lawrence translated into English *Mastro-Don Gesualdo,* a novel dealing with southern passion.

A few years ago when the Nobel Prize was awarded to Grazia Deledda for *The Flight into Egypt,* the world became aware that Sardinia also had a novelist of merit. Her stories and novels depicting Sardinian customs and manners are based upon the observations of her youth. For the last twenty-five years she has been living in Rome and has recently turned to other subjects. Her ability to portray the crises in the lives of her feminine characters is her greatest talent.

Altho Luigi Pirandello is known to Americans primarily as a dramatist, he did not begin to write plays until he was past fifty. His early works were novels and collections of short stories. He is essentially romantic by nature, evolving strange plots and depicting peculiar characters swayed by their moods. He has been called an intellectualized and sophisticated Verga in his treatment of Sicilian types. *The Old and the Young* and *Shoot* reveal Pirandello's cynical attitude toward contemporary civilization with its "clamorous and dizzy machinery of life."

The group of young writers with whom

Pirandello allied himself revolted against the elaborate style of Gabriele D'Annunzio. This tendency to fine writing has weakened the majority of D'Annunzio's novels, but a book like *The Triumph of Death* proves that at times he could write impressively as well as brilliantly. The reaction to classical tradition in Italian literature as well as to the ideals of D'Annunzio was started in 1912 by F. T. Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto, of which the key-word was freedom. The experiments of the futurists have been an interesting but not a permanent contribution to Italian literature.

After the period of Cervantes, Spanish fiction declined until the middle of the nineteenth century. The principal figure in the revival was José María de Pereda. Just before Pereda went to Madrid, Fernán Caballero had written her popular novel, *La Gaviota.* Her descriptions of native scenes led Pereda to turn to Spanish subjects and characters. Thus he became the founder of realism in the Spanish novel. The extremely local character of his work, depicting generally the scenes of his native Montaña, have prevented even his best novels, *Sotileza* and *Peñas Arriba,* from gaining attention outside of Spain.

The same thing is true to a slightly less extent of the contemporaries of Pereda. They are all so intensely national that a wider knowledge of Spanish history and customs than that of the

average foreigner is needed to appreciate them fully. Juan Valera is an idealist and mystic, whose *Pepita Jiménez* relates the struggle of a priest with ascetic ideals against the charms of Pepita. Pedro Antonio de Alarcón is a romanticist with a gift for dramatic narration. The humorous adventures and the lively narrative of his *El Sombrero de tres Picos* have assured him a permanent place in Spanish literature. Many of his stories are improbable, but they are vividly told and always entertaining.

A great admirer of Pereda was Benito Pérez Galdós, who has described in his *Episodios Nacionales* the chief events of Spanish history in the nineteenth century. Besides these episodes he wrote many novels attacking the faults of the contemporary society of Madrid but pointing out the admirable characteristics of the Spanish people. In the immense number and individuality of the characters in his novels he resembles Dickens. His ability to elicit the interest of the reader even in minor figures and his mastery of detail are his most notable traits.

After the death of Pérez Galdós, the recognized leader of Spanish novelists was Emilia Pardo Bazán. Her realistic novels about Galicia, especially *Los Pazos de Ulloa* and *La Madre Naturaleza,* and her critical remarks concerning the method of Zola caused her to be classed with the naturalists. She does not seek the repulsive

intentionally, but never avoids disagreeable facts if they are necessary adjuncts of her stories.

Armando Palacio Valdés was also influenced by the French naturalistic school, but he was broader in his view of domestic life. *Marta y María* and *La Hermana San Sulpicio* contain excellent studies of feminine character as he had observed it in the homes of Asturias. His novels are written in a natural, easy style, enlivened by a sense of humor.

In addition to these principal writers of fiction in the last half of the nineteenth century, several others published novels which attracted considerable attention. Among these are *La Regenta* by Leopoldo Alas, Jacinto Octavio Picón's *Dulce y Sabrosa,* and José María Matheu's *Jaque a la Reina.*

Of twentieth-century Spanish novelists, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez is the most widely read in Europe and America. The scene of his early novels was Valencia, which he knew intimately. Later he used the novel to convey his revolutionary ideas and social theories. He is primarily a novelist of action, often violent, as readers of *Los Cuatro Jinetes del Apocalipsis* (*The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*) and *Sangre y Arena* (*Blood and Sand*) will recall. He gives little thought to plot, characterization, or style. With tremendous force he asserts his ideas by showing the reaction of the crowd to a

particular environment. The background assumes a place of major importance in his stories.

Pío Baroja's novels are also filled with action. His favorite theme is the life of the lower classes, which he treats objectively. In *La Feria de los Discretos* (*The Market-place of the Discreet*), for example, the different types of a city pass in review. Baroja has written several trilogies, recounting the adventures of his wandering heroes, who find little satisfaction in life. He takes a pessimistic view of modern society because unhappiness and strife bring so much discontent.

The appeal of the novels of Ramón María del Valle-Inclán will always be to those who delight in the work of a conscious artist. He strives for a rhythmical prose, giving much attention to sound. For that reason adequate translations of his work are rare. His trilogy on the second Carlist War is his best work.

Recently writers in the Spanish-speaking countries of South America have attracted some attention by their novels and stories on native themes. From them may come in the future some valuable contributions to Spanish literature, since a national culture is developing under the more stable governments.

During the last decade there has been an increasing interest among English and American readers in the literatures discussed in this chap-

ter. Translations of the more characteristic novels have been made, and books and articles have been written in English about the leading authors. Such a manifestation of interest is a hopeful sign, for acquaintance with the fiction of a people leads to a better understanding of national traits.

XIX

THE MODERN SHORT STORY

With the increase in the number of magazines the demand for short stories has become very great. They are the chief reading matter for a large section of the population, which does not have time for the novel. Furthermore, the stories in a magazine require less concentration than a long novel. They deal intensively with one situation and develop rapidly to a climax. Everyone with any inclination for writing has endeavored to supply this market. The result has been a multitude of very indifferent stories in the older forms and some striking experiments by recent writers.

Most of the novelists discussed in the preceding chapters have written short stories, which in general have the same characteristics as their novels. Therefore we shall not consider them unless they have had an important place in the history of the short story.

The difference between the narratives of the Renaissance and the modern short story lies primarily in the matter of coherent development. The former are a collection of episodes bearing more or less directly on a central theme, while the modern short story progresses directly

to a definite goal. In early literature the parables of the *New Testament* resemble most closely the short story. The accounts of the prodigal son, the good Samaritan, and the unworthy servant, for example, have the main elements of excellent short stories, but their plots are merely outlined. All the details of setting and character are left to the imagination of the reader. The narrator desired to teach a moral truth as directly as possible. Therefore, he gave only the essential facts.

The immediate predecessors of the short story are the romantic tales of Hoffmann, the fairy tales of the Grimm Brothers in German and those of Hans Christian Andersen in Danish, and Washington Irving's legends of the Dutch settlers of New York. Influenced by the Gothic romances, Hoffmann peopled his tales with grotesque characters and prowling ghosts. His striking descriptions and analytical power redeem such tales as *The Devil's Elixir* from the worst faults of the type. *The Kinder und Hausmärchen* by Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm retell the folk-tales of the German forest and countryside. In the preface the world of these tales is described. "Kings, princes, faithful servants, honest craftsmen, above all, fishermen, millers, charcoal burners and shepherds, all the folk who live nearest to nature appear in it." Andersen also found the material for many of his fairy-tales in folk-

lore. He gave to them, however, a charm which no other writer has ever been able to attain. He has no rival in the affection of children the world over. Altho Irving's *Rip Van Winkle, Legend of Sleepy Hollow,* and *Tales of a Traveler* are superior in characterization to the other tales written during the first quarter of the nineteenth century, they hardly marked an advance in the development of plot in the short story. They lack the condensation so emphasized by Edgar Ellan Poe as the essential characteristic of the short story.

When Poe was struggling to gain recognition as a writer, he received from a Baltimore paper a prize of one hundred dollars for a *MS. found in a Bottle,* a romantic story of adventure. After this success he wrote about seventy stories, ranging from purely romantic narratives to analytical studies of obsessed conscience. A well-known group is composed of stories in which he solved mysteries, such as those in *The Gold Bug, The Murders in the Rue Morgue,* and *The Mystery of Marie Roget.* His favorite themes, however, were fear, terror, revenge, and physical horror. The atmosphere of his stories adds to the powerful impression they produce upon the reader. His ability to create a vivid effect by weird and suggestive settings has never been surpassed. The dampness of the vaults described in *The Cask of Amontillado* and the gloom of

The House of Usher pervade these stories with their sinister significance.

The appeal of Poe's stories is almost entirely an intellectual one, for he arouses no feeling of sympathy for the victims or of hatred for the murderers. The persons in his stories lack individuality. We learn little about them except that they are tortured by some fear or dominated by some motive. Poe is primarily concerned with the solution of a problem or the depiction of a mood induced by some exceptional event. The tone is often morbid or melancholy, with death playing a principal part. When Poe tried to write stories in a lighter tone, he failed because he had no real sense of humor. His province was the horrible. The gruesome scenes in such stories as *The Tell-Tale Heart, The Black Cat,* and *Ligeia* make the reader shudder at the vividness of the description.

Poe's subjects are universal and not local. In all his work there is nothing about American life. For that reason his genius was recognized in Europe when American authors were generally disregarded. His direct manner and concise style appealed particularly to the French. The American readers of the nineteenth century were shocked at his attitude toward life and missed in his stories the moral lesson to which they were accustomed.

As he supplied this moral lesson, Hawthorne

was far more representative of the period. Furthermore, he discovered the romantic element in New England history and became its interpreter. His stories reflect his own reserved and serious nature. He said that they should be read at twilight because they could not stand the sunshine. Many are allegorical and symbolical. The external events merely indicate the conflict of spiritual forces in the hearts of the characters. The mental states resulting from these conflicts are analyzed in careful studies. *Ethan Brand,* for instance, is the study of a man who developed the intellect at the expense of the heart.

Hawthorne's romances of New England life show that he possessed a subtle humor. The misadventures of the tobacco pedler in *Mr. Higginbotham's Catastrophe* and the eagerness of the old people in *Dr. Heidegger's Experiment* for the elixir of life are most amusing in revealing human nature. Hawthorne's understanding of human nature is evident in practically all the stories in *Twice-Told Tales* and *Mosses from an Old Manse.* His aim was never to "swerve aside from the human heart."

The easterners of Hawthorne's generation considered the far West a region of violence unrestrained by authority. The inhabitants of the California mining camps were supposed to be so hardened that they had no compassion for the unfortunate. Francis Bret Harte, who lived in

the West from 1854 to 1870, found these people to be as sympathetic and kind to those in trouble as any other class. In *The Luck of Roaring Camp, Tennessee's Partner, The Outcasts of Poker Flat,* and other stories he pictured the West as it actually was in the early days. The simple pathos and humor of these stories brought him great popularity in the East. Unfortunately, his later work was inferior because it lacked originality. Bret Harte was the discoverer of the West as the subject for realistic fiction. Since his day many authors have written stories about the settlement of the vast country beyond the Mississippi, but few have caught its spirit so well.

The short story was further developed by the two French masters, Mérimée and Maupassant. Their stories are remarkable for the conciseness and directness with which emotions are portrayed. Sometimes a single short sentence reveals the tragedy or irony of the whole story. Prosper Mérimée was particularly attracted by the colorful scenes of Corsican and Spanish life. His plots are tragic, and his characters are impetuous. But he is singularly restrained in his treatment. He coolly analyzes the reasons why persons act as they do. *Mateo Falcone, La Venus d'Ille* and *Carmen* are masterpieces of this kind of character study. Through Bizet's opera the fascinating but faithless cigaret girl, Carmen,

has become known to many who have never read Mérimée.

Maupassant was even more cynical. He was impressed with the selfishness and meanness of the majority of persons. So many seemed to delight in persecuting the unfortunate or the simple-minded for their own gain or pleasure. This attitude is the theme of *Ball-of-Fat* and *The Piece of String*. The ironic situations of life furnished Maupassant with material for another type of story. An example is *The False Gems*, which brings out his cynicism. Often his characters are the victims of a delusion only to be enlightened after it is too late. Like Mme. Loisel in *The Necklace* they discover that their sacrifices have all been in vain.

Some of Maupassant's stories are merely impressionistic sketches of a mood resulting from some special circumstances. He was reporting impersonally what he had observed, and concealed nothing, even tho the details were sordid. The freedom with which he treats unpleasant subjects repels the reader. In scenes of misery and cruelty he found the most dramatic material. The events of the Franco-Prussian War gave him an opportunity to show in *Father Milon*, *Two Friends*, and similar stories the hatred and brutality engendered by war. In a cold, unemotional manner Maupassant dealt with the harsh aspects of life. The intense reality

of the scenes is due to his remarkable skill in construction.

By an entirely different method Anton Chekhov gains an equally impressive realism. His stories are loosely constructed, so that often the connection between the action and the conclusion is not clear. He reveals his characters by a description of the atmosphere which surrounds them and produces their moods. They are overburdened by the dulness of existence. This sense of futility was an obsession with Chekhov. When he was sixteen, he wrote to a friend: "I received your letter at the height of the most awful boredom." Again at the age of forty-four he wrote: "Things are going very well with me, but it is very monotonous and boring; one day is very much like another." This feeling accounts for the similarity of Chekhov's characters and explains his sympathy for them.

His subjects are frequently unimportant, for they are merely minor episodes in the everyday lives of ordinary persons. Nevertheless, they bring out strikingly the unhappiness, superstition, disillusionment, and weaknesses of character which are universal. In the failure of persons to understand each other there is tragic humor as well as pathos. The Russian critics have used the phrase "tears through laughter" to describe this quality in Chekhov's work. The development of his unique manner may be traced

by comparing *The Steppe, Happiness,* and *Vanka,* stories written in his earlier period, with those written after 1890, among which are such perfect examples of his art as *Ward No. 6, The Teacher of Literature,* and *The Lady with the Dog.*

Maxim Gorky's stories are even more gloomy, for his early experiences as a bootmaker's boy, pantry boy, worker in an underground bakery, and laborer in South Russia, where he came into contact with vagabonds, thieves, harlots, and outcasts of every type, made him extremely bitter. His name is Aleksey Maksimovich Péshkov, but he chose as a pen-name Gorky, meaning bitter or miserable. The stories belong to the early period of his literary work; since 1900 he has been writing novels, dramas, and autobiographical books. He began with romantic stories like *Chelkash* and *My Fellow-Traveler,* but soon turned to realism. *Her Lover* and *Twenty-six Men and a Girl,* perhaps his finest stories, illustrate the idea that "the more a human creature has tasted of bitter things the more it hungers after the sweet things of life." Poor Teresa longs for a faithful lover, and the twenty-six bakers seek for an ideal of innocence and beauty. Gorky invariably spoils the artistic effect of his stories by a tendency to philosophize on social conditions. Since this tendency has increased, his later novels and dramas with a few exceptions are in-

ferior. His position in contemporary literature is due primarily to his attitude toward Revolutionary Russia.

Second only to Gorky in popularity at home and abroad among twentieth-century Russian writers has been Leonid Nikolaevich Andreyev. In America he is known especially as the author of the drama, *He Who Gets Slapped.* As he belonged to the *intelligentsia,* he was restless and dissatisfied with life. Nothing seemed real to him but death, which is prominent in many of his stories. *Once upon a Time There Lived, The Governor,* and *The Seven that Were Hanged* are studies of how men meet the death they know to be inevitable. Another group might be characterized by the opening words of *The Red Laugh*—"madness and horror." Andreyev is not pleasant reading, but he describes very powerfully, altho in a somewhat elaborate style, abnormal states of mind.

The French and Russian writers were primarily interested in the realistic story of moods and passions. The English writers were more successful with the story of adventure and mystery. Stevenson's *Sir de Malétroit's Door* and *A Lodging for the Night* are romantic tales of the fifteenth century, when the unexpected might occur at any moment. Even his psychological character studies, such as *Markheim,* show evidences of his fancy and imagination. Since he was always

concerned with events for their own sake, he propounded no philosophical ideas or social theories.

The detective story is the most popular form of the mystery story. From the vast number of such stories only a few have qualities which entitle them to consideration. A. Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson, traces the criminal or solves the mystery from some minor and previously neglected bit of evidence. G. K. Chesterton's Father Brown, on the other hand, reconstructs the circumstances of the crime by imagining himself in the place of the criminal. The conclusion reached by the writers of detective fiction is that there is no perfect crime. The majority, however, go to rather absurd extremes to prove their contention.

Another type of story which English writers have favored is that of local color. The master of this type is Rudyard Kipling, whose *Plain Tales from the Hills, Jungle Books, Soldiers Three, The Day's Work,* and other well-known collections have proved that people are very much the same whether they live in India or the Sussex countryside. During his younger days Kipling was a journalist on an Anglo-Indian daily. He was an ardent imperialist, expressing the ideas current in the last years of Queen Victoria's reign. In a review of *Debits and Cred-*

cts, a recent collection of stories, Brander Matthews stated Kipling's creed: "Obey the law, do your duty; play the game, be a man, and do the day's work." From this creed it is easy to see why he is not esteemed by the "Young Intellectuals." But they could learn much from his method of observation and his craftsmanship. *Without Benefit of Clergy, The Man Who Was, The Courting of Dinah Shadd, The Man Who Would Be King,* and *The Brushwood Boy* alone justify the claims of the admirers of Kipling that in variety of subject and understanding of treatment he has few rivals.

Other examples of local-color stories in contemporary English fiction are James M. Barrie's sketches of Scotch life in *A Window in Thrums* and *Auld Licht Idyls,* and Israel Zangwill's interpretations of Jewish life in *Ghetto Tragedies* and *Ghetto Comedies.* Barrie's stories have the charm of quaintness. The amusing inhabitants of Thrums seem to have been transported from the eighteenth century into the twentieth without any realization of the changed conditions in the outside world. They are sufficient unto themselves.

Zangwill's characters are very conscious of modern conditions and struggle against the obstacles of their surroundings. His theme, often treated humorously, is the conflict between the

traditional and new ideas as it affects the destiny of his race.

The local color for the stories of O. Henry (William Sydney Porter) was obtained from his boyhood days in North Carolina, his experiences on a ranch in Texas, his wanderings through Central and South America, and his residence in New York. In *The Four Million* he relates with pathos and humor the pleasures and sorrows of the clerks, the shop girls, the policemen, the denizens of the crowded tenements, and the various other persons in the bustling crowd of a great city. With as keen observation he caught the underlying spirit of the other sections he visited. Every story in any one of his more representative volumes, such as *Roads of Destiny, Cabbages and Kings,* and *Options,* reveals his intimate knowledge of the thoughts and feelings of the great majority. This is the secret of his popularity with the casual reader.

Another reason for this popularity is his hatred of literary conventions. He is so brief and rapid that his style at times becomes telegraphic. His use of colloquialisms and slang increases the naturalness of his dialog but will restrict the appeal of his work because of the local and temporary character of such phraseology. O. Henry's method is to surprize the reader. By a careful arrangement of details he leads his readers to expect a certain conclusion. Then in the

last paragraph he discloses the true situation and ends with an unexpected climax. This method becomes very monotonous if several stories are read at the same time, but is effective for a single story. Thus O. Henry holds the interest and compels the reader to finish the story to see what happens. For a time after his success the surprize ending dominated the American short story.

The successors of O. Henry in the humorous delineation of certain American types and the use of unconventional language are Irvin Cobb and Ring Lardner. Cobb described himself adequately and justly when he said, "I'm still a reporter, and I expect to be a reporter always." His *Old Judge Priest* and other collections of Southern stories prove his contention that he has a "sense of news values." His stories are composed of elaborate descriptions, amusing incidents, and rapid-fire conversations in colloquial diction. Lardner's humor has similar qualities in that it is based on bad grammar, puns, and the misuse of words. But Lardner is more satirical concerning American failings than Cobb. The desire of the uncultured newly rich to gain a place in society, and the general boredom, are the objects of his ridicule. *You Know Me, Al*, the letters of a baseball player, is a treasury of American slang.

We shall conclude the discussion of the short

story with two writers who have been compared with Chekhov. In England, Katherine Mansfield won praise for her characterization and careful treatment of significant details in the stories in *Bliss,* followed by *The Garden Party* and *The Dove's Nest.* When she died in 1923 at the age of thirty-four, English fiction lost "probably the most faithful and at the same time the most original of Chekhov's disciples," according to Prince Mirsky.

The failure of persons to understand one another and the drabness of American life in a small town are the themes of Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio.* "It is," he says, "only at rare moments that we live." Our lives are ordinarily dull because we are trying to adapt ourselves to more or less uncongenial surroundings. His youths do too much thinking about the problems of existence to be representative American boys in their adolescent years. They are exceptionally sensitive and artistic in temperament. Anderson has, nevertheless, pointed out an important fact, namely, that in the confusion of modern life there is little mutual understanding of the views held by persons in different environments.

The tendency among the more serious writers of the short story to-day seems to be away from the carefully developed story of plot and toward the story of character. Some, like Ernest

Hemingway in *Men Without Women,* let the dialog convey the impression. Others resort to precise descriptions. But all desire more freedom in form and expression.

XX

THE CLASSICAL DRAMA

THE Greek drama originated in the choral hymns chanted at the festivals in honor of Dionysus, god of wine. These hymns expressed commiseration for the trails which the god had suffered during his sojourns on earth. Sometimes the leader of the chorus would relate myths concerning these experiences. The chorus was dressed as satyrs, the half-human and half-goat-like attendants of the god. From the Greek word meaning goat, *tragos*, is derived tragedy. After the formal part of the celebration at the altar of Dionysus the crowd, inspired by the wine, probably sang comic songs during the procession or comus. These were the origin of comedy. This form of the drama, however, was developed much later than tragedy.

Thespis is supposed to have invented tragedy by having the leader of the chorus carry on a brief dialog with the chorus as a whole. He made the choral hymn also more dramatic. After Thespis various innovations were introduced until at the time of Æschylus the construction of a tragedy consisted of a prolog to give the necessary background for the story, the entry of the chorus,

the dramatic episodes interspersed with the choral odes, and the final scene.

The tragedies were produced in competition for prizes at the festivals of Dionysus under the direction of the authors. Usually three poets competed with three tragedies and a satyr drama. At first the poets themselves trained their choruses and declaimed the dramatic portions of their tragedies. Later the plays were performed by professional actors. In practically every case the plots dealt with myths well known to the audiences. Herodotus tells us that Phrynichus, the immediate predecessor of Æschylus, was fined for producing a play on a recent event, the capture of Miletus by the Persians. The Athenians wanted their drama to be heroic and not realistic, for it was part of a religious festival.

By introducing a second actor Æschylus increased the importance of the dialog. His tragedies generally deal with the punishment meted out by the gods or fate for disobedience or crime. Of his seventy tragedies only seven are extant. *Prometheus Bound* and *Agamemnon* are the most powerful. Prometheus, bound to a rock, is doomed to have his liver devoured each morning by a vulture because he brought fire to men. Courageously he refuses to obey the dictates of Zeus and scorns the vengeance of the ruler of the gods. To Io, also a victim of Zeus, he foretells

that one of her descendants will free him. A chorus of ocean nymphs expresses sympathy for the hero in his suffering and admiration for his courage. Prometheus's revolt against the tyranny of Zeus appealed to the English poets in the nineteenth century. Mrs. Browning translated the drama, and Shelley wrote *Prometheus Unbound.*

Agamemnon is the first drama of a trilogy based on the curse placed on the house of Atreus for various murders. Agamemnon is murdered by his wife Clytemnestra when he returns from the Trojan war. Her motives are revenge, jealousy, and desire for power. Just before sailing Agamemnon had sacrificed his daughter Iphigenia to insure fair winds for the fleet. Then he brought back with him the Trojan seeress, Cassandra. While he was at Troy, Clytemnestra had plotted with Ægisthus to usurp the throne. At the conclusion of the tragedy she says, "I and thou, ruling o'er this house, will settle all things rightly." In the last two plays of the trilogy, Orestes avenges his father's death and is pursued by the Furies for the murder of his mother until the curse is removed by the intervention of Athena.

The tragedies of Æschylus are impressive because of the power of their themes and the grandeur of their style. His heroic figures speak in a sonorous style, attained through the use of

compound words and weighty phrases. Even the lyric passages have this elevated tone. Altho his plots are simple, his treatment gives them unusual significance. When Æschylus began writing, the drama consisted of narrative declamations and choral responses. He developed these into a unified but uncomplicated tragedy.

The development was completed by Sophocles, whose *Œdipus the King* has been called the greatest of all tragedies. Sophocles added a third actor, made the chorus an integral part of the drama, portrayed the characters in more detail, and introduced dramatic irony. For sixty years he won either a first or second prize at the festivals. He wrote over one hundred plays, of which seven remain. Like Æschylus he chose subjects from the myths concerning the ruling families but showed how the members of those families brought about their tragic fates by their actions.

In the *Antigone* the heroine defies the king because she considers his order forbidding the burial of her brother contrary to the divine laws. She is willing to die for what she believes to be right. Creon's refusal to listen to advice until it is too late causes not only Antigone's death but that of his son and his wife. The heroine of *Electra* is another woman of determination. She urges Orestes to avenge the death of Agamemnon. In these two tragedies Sophocles is emi-

nently successful in the portrayal of contrasting characters.

Œdipus the King is the masterpiece of Greek drama because of its flawless construction and dramatic intensity. Œdipus brings his own doom by his relentless search for the murderer of his predecessor. Slowly but surely he discovers the awful truth that he has killed his father and married his mother in accordance with the decree of the oracle. He has tried to escape this fate, but a combination of circumstances has prevented him. His own impulsiveness and pride in his wisdom were his ruin. The dramatic irony in the play consists in the fact that the audience realizes that the curses of Œdipus against the murderer really apply to himself. The tragedy is profound, for at the end the powerful king has become a blind suppliant to Creon, whom he has previously accused in his anger.

The dramas of Euripides, the last great Athenian dramatist in the fifth century B. C., are more modern than those of his predecessors. He presents human passions as the causes of the tragedies instead of divine vengeance or the decrees of fate. He was the first to use the motive of love for the main theme of his plots. Altho his characters were presumably the persons of the Greek legends, they were drawn from the Athenians whom Euripides had observed. They argue in the manner of the sophists and express

somewhat radical views on politics, philosophy, and religion. Hence the plays of Euripides appealed to his audiences, altho he won few prizes because of his radical opinions. As later writers quoted passages from them to substantiate their opinions, a large number of his characteristic statements have been preserved.

The most striking innovations made by Euripides were the introduction of humor and the use of the happy ending. In *Alcestis,* Hercules furnishes the humor by his remarks after he has had too much to drink. He also brings about the happy ending, for he restores to Admetus his devoted wife who has died in his place. *Iphigenia among the Taurians* also ends happily when the brother and sister are united and escape the dangers besetting them through the intervention of Athena.

In his *Medea,* a drama of jealousy and revenge, Euripides created one of the great tragic heroines of all literature. After ten years Jason deserts Medea for the daughter of the king of Corinth. Medea sends a poisoned robe to the bride and kills her own children in her anger against her faithless husband. The struggle between jealousy and mother love in the passionate heart of the deserted wife is depicted with great dramatic power. The character of Medea has been a challenge as well as an inspiration to many famous actresses.

For his attitude toward the drama Euripides was criticized in his own day. A satirical comedy by Aristophanes, the *Frogs,* contains a quarrel between Æschylus and Euripides about the claims of each to be the greater poet. The decision is rendered by Dionysus at a trial in Hades, where the god has gone disguised as Hercules to bring back to Athens a tragic poet, who will restore the former glories of the drama. As Aristophanes was a conservative, he treats Euripides harshly and favors Æschylus.

The modern reader finds the plays of Aristophanes difficult to understand because the satire is directed against the customs of his day and the jokes allude to local happenings. Unless a person has an extensive knowledge of Athenian society in the fifth century B. C., he will have to consult explanatory notes continually. Aristophanes ridiculed the philosophers in the *Clouds,* the demagogs in the *Wasps,* and the Athenians and the human race generally in the *Birds.* He names these plays from the choruses dressed in fantastic costumes to suggest strange effects. He often indulged in vulgar jokes and atrocious puns at the expense of his contemporaries. Scurrilous abuse and beatings increased the reality of the conflicts upon which he based his plots. Notwithstanding all his coarseness and willingness to descend to the lowest type of humor to get a laugh from his audience, Aristoph-

anes could write fine poetry. The graceful songs and hymns for his choruses are evidences of his gift as a lyric poet.

After Aristophanes the comedy of satire became more general in tone and was finally replaced by the New Comedy. The theme was the intrigue on the part of a young man to outwit his father so that he might marry the girl of his choice, who at the conclusion of the play is proved to be the daughter of a respectable citizen altho she has been brought up in servitude. The young man accomplishes his purpose through the aid of a devoted and clever slave. About twenty years ago fragments of plays by Menander were discovered in Egypt. He had long been considered the chief writer of the New Comedy from the references to his plays and the adaptations by the Latin authors. Through these adaptations Menander's comedies exerted considerable influence on Molière and Shakespeare.

Before Plautus began to adapt the plays of the New Comedy to meet the demands of a Roman audience, he had been a stage carpenter and actor. Therefore, he knew that the spectators wished primarily to be amused. He filled his comedies with exaggerated characters, rough humor, plenty of action, spirited dialog, and allusions to Roman customs. His loosely constructed plots deal with the discomfiture of an unattrac-

tive character like Euclio, the miser in the *Pot of Gold,* the fooling of an unsuspecting father as in *The Haunted House,* or the complications arising from misunderstandings such as those of twins in the *Menæchmi.* This last play is the source for Shakespeare's *Comedy of Errors.* The comedies of Plautus seem extremely artificial because of the speeches addressed to the audience, the overheard conversations, the asides, and the soliloquies. The actors are apparently taking the audience into their confidence and explaining their thoughts so that no one may be in doubt concerning their motives. It must have been as easy to follow a play by Plautus as it is to watch a motion-picture comedy.

Terence, on the other hand, did not cater to the vulgar taste of the average theater-goer in his day, but wrote to please the minority, for whom clever wit and excellent characterization were more entertaining than coarse farces. His contemporaries accused him of plagiarism because he followed very closely his Greek sources. They also compared him with Plautus and criticized his method of combining plays written by Menander. Terence's plots are monotonous, for with one exception they are based on a recognition scene. Another favorite device was the use of pairs of lovers whose destinies were intertwined. Terence was most successful when he was able to present contrasting characters. *The*

Brothers shows the results of two opposite systems of rearing boys. As neither system is entirely successful, several amusing situations arise. Altho Terence's plots are simple, his characters are so cleverly drawn that he has been imitated by many European dramatists.

The Romans went to the theater to be amused and not to be reminded that disobedience of divine laws is inevitably punished. Therefore, few tragedies were ever performed. The students of Greek literature did, however, try to imitate the great Athenian dramatists. The chief of these imitators was the philosopher Seneca, who used tragedy to teach the Stoic principles of endurance. His nine plays are declamatory and argumentative without dramatic action. They are filled with horrors, which undoubtedly pleased the court of Nero but which disgust the modern reader. Their characters are artificial types talking like philosophers or orators. Yet these tragedies are supremely important in the history of drama as the source for the early Elizabethan drama in England and the classical drama in France. Shakespeare expressed the general attitude toward them in the speech of Polonius about the ability of the Players in *Hamlet*. "Seneca cannot be too heavy, nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and liberty, these are the only men."

During the Roman Empire the gladiatorial

combats and the spectacular exhibitions in the Colosseum superseded the drama. The Roman populace preferred to see the Christians devoured by wild beasts or to hear the groans of the dying gladiators. The emperors spent fortunes and lives of numerous slaves to furnish magnificent spectacles for the entertainment of their followers. When the church became the dominating power in Europe, all performances were forbidden on account of their brutality. For nearly one thousand years the drama disappeared from European literature.

XXI

THE ELIZABETHAN DRAMA

ALTHO the great revival of the drama came toward the end of the fifteenth century, the beginnings of a renewed interest in dramatic presentations appeared several centuries earlier. About the year 1000 an English monk named Ælfric wrote a book to teach his pupils to speak Latin. It is in the form of a dialog between the teacher and the various members of the class. He asks each one questions about his occupation and comments on the answers. The English words were placed over the Latin in the form of an interlinear translation. Probably this method of instruction was frequently used to impress the lessons more firmly upon the young men's minds.

The church also employed the drama to present more vividly its teachings. The mass is a three-act drama, with the priests, choir, and congregation all taking part. The section from the Processional to the Halleluia forms the first part; from the reciting of the Creed to the Adoration of the Host is the second; while the concluding act consists of the remaining portion from the Agnus Dei to the Benediction. On special days, particularly Easter and Christmas,

the priests enacted a brief dramatization of an appropriate scene from the narratives in the Gospels, such as the appearance of the angel to the women at the sepulcher of Christ. Later other stories from both the Old and New Testaments were dramatized until a cycle from the creation to the last judgment had been completed. These plays based upon biblical material are called mysteries. Another group recounting marvelous incidents in the lives of the saints are known as miracles.

At first the clergy produced the mysteries within the church or in the churchyard, but when they began to introduce comic elements, like the argument between Noah and his wife, the bishop stopped the performances. Then the guilds, the medieval trade associations, took over the production of the plays. At the Corpus Christi festival each guild would give the mystery most appropriate for its trade. For example, the shepherds presented the Christmas play, and the watermen were assigned the flood. From the account-books of the guilds we have learned the details of these presentations and the cost of the various items. In England the stage was a movable platform, which was drawn from place to place through the town so that everyone might have an opportunity to see the play. On the Continent, however, it was customary to erect a stage in the market-place.

The great majority of the mysteries and miracles did not have a unified plot; they were merely a visual representation of loosely connected narratives. Sometimes the author would interpolate an episode from contemporary life. Finally an unknown author in the fourteenth century had the temerity to reduce the biblical episode to one concluding scene and to write a realistic comedy of English life. *The Second Shepherd's Play* opens with a discussion concerning the hardships endured by shepherds. This scene is a preparation for the ensuing ones, in which a thief steals a lamb and almost fools the shepherds by a clever trick but is finally caught and tossed in a blanket by way of punishment. This little play is a merry farce with several moments of dramatic suspense.

In the fifteenth century the morality play became very popular. The characters of the moralities are abstractions representing the seven deadly sins and the seven cardinal virtues. These fight for the soul of man by tempting him to sin or encouraging him to do good deeds. The moralities were written to instruct the people in the doctrines of the church and to warn them against evil. *Everyman,* recently revived for a few performances, emphasizes very strongly the danger of forsaking good deeds for worldly pleasures.

After the humanists of the Renaissance dis-

covered the comedies of Plautus and Terence and the tragedies of Seneca, the construction of the drama was modified by the imitation of these classical models. The subjects, however, were still to a large extent native. The first English comedy, *Ralph Royster Doyster,* is an adaptation of the *Miles Gloriosus* of Plautus. It was written by Nicholas Udall for his pupils at Eton. A more thoroughly English comedy is *Gammer Gurton's Needle,* a coarse farce concerning the search for a needle lost while Gammer was mending the breeches of her hired man, Hodge. It gives a realistic picture of life among the rustic classes.

Tragedy was more dependent than comedy upon the classical models. The first English tragedy, *Gorboduc,* by Thomas Norton and Thomas Sackville, has practically no action. A messenger describes the battles and confusion caused by Gorboduc's dividing his kingdom between his two sons, and a chorus of old men points out the moral lesson to be derived from this unwise action. The purpose of the authors was to show Elizabeth the necessity of marrying and providing England with a royal heir. The fact that Gorboduc is written in blank verse and divided into five acts had an important effect upon the further development of English tragedy.

Between the years 1560 and 1590, the approximate date of Shakespeare's first play, Thomas Kyd, John Lyly, Robert Greene, and Christopher Marlowe were writing new plays or revising old ones for audiences desiring thrilling spectacles or amusing situations. These men prepared the way for Shakespeare. Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy* is a melodrama of violent passions leading to numerous murders. Lyly wrote witty court comedies of a somewhat fanciful nature, such as *Endymion,* a graceful compliment to Elizabeth. Greene, on the other hand, took his material and characters from country life. The subplot of *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* consists of a romantic love story. Because he introduced the love motive in his plays, Greene has been called the founder of romantic comedy.

The most talented of Shakespeare's predecessors was Christopher Marlowe. Educated at Cambridge, he was inspired by the ideas of the Renaissance to seek all knowledge. Like his Faust, however, he indulged in the pleasures of the tavern, where he was killed in a quarrel at the age of twenty-nine. In a few years he accomplished more toward the enrichment of English drama than all his contemporaries. At this period even Shakespeare was writing very indifferent plays. It was Marlowe's "mighty line" that raised his tragedies above the general level. Such verses as the following addressed by Faust

to Helen show his unsurpassed command of blank verse:

> Was this the face that launched a thousand ships
> And burnt the topless towers of Ilium?
> Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss.

Each one of Marlowe's heroes strives to attain power through a different means. *Tamburlaine* is the story of the great Tartar seeking power by conquering the rulers of the earth and even defying the gods in his pride. *The Jew of Malta* depicts the tortures inflicted by Barabus upon his victims in his mad lust for riches. This tragedy of horrors reveals most clearly Marlowe's chief fault—weakness in characterization. From the point of dramatic construction *Edward II,* a study of a king's struggle against circumstances, is the best of his plays. But the theme and poetic grandeur of *Faustus* have gained it a higher place among the great English tragedies in spite of its faulty construction.

Dissatisfied with the inadequacy of the knowledge he has obtained from his studies, Faust sells his soul to the devil in return for twenty-four years of absolute power. The experiences of these years, when the magic of Mephistophilis is at the service of Faust, are recounted in the drama. At the end he prays for one more day to repent, but is carried off to hell by the devils amid thunder and lightning as he cries:

My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
Adders and serpents, let me breathe awhile!
Ugly hell, gape not! Come not, Lucifer!
I'll burn my books!—Ah, Mephistophilis!

While Marlowe was writing his splendid lines, a young man from Stratford-on-Avon was learning the ways of the theater. He had probably been the despair of his father, a prosperous tradesman, because he preferred wandering along the banks of the Avon and through the woods and fields to settling down in any steady occupation. Furthermore, at eighteen he had married Anne Hathaway, the daughter of a farmer from a neighboring village. In order to support his increasing family Shakespeare may have joined one of the traveling companies of actors which gave performances in Stratford. At any rate he became a member of Burbage's company in London.

Altho he played minor rôles during his whole association with the theater, his work as an actor was supplementary to his duties as one of the playwrights of the company. At first he rewrote the old plays in the repertory, often collaborating with others. He vitalized their plots and gave life to their wooden characters. In a short time he was writing original plays based on stories he had read in histories or romances. He invented practically none of his plots, but combined incidents taken from several sources. Many

of these plots are highly improbable and sometimes weakly developed. We must remember, however, that Shakespeare was writing for the entertainment of an uncritical audience and not for the analysis of the trained scholar. That his plots hold the attention of all classes has been proved by three hundred years of performances in Europe and America.

Shakespeare's greatness lies in his unsurpassed ability in characterization and in his power of poetic expression. He understood equally well how to portray the emotions of a crafty villain, a half-wit clown, a jealous husband, a melancholy youth, an innocent girl, or an amorous queen. As a play progresses, the characters reveal themselves in word and action. They suffer on account of tragic faults or comic weaknesses. The obstinate pride of Lear and Cordelia, the misdirected ambition of Macbeth, the suspicious jealousy of Othello, the impetuous anger of Romeo, and the intellectual preoccupation of Hamlet are the underlying causes of the five great tragedies. Altho the outcome in the comedies depends more upon situation, almost every one of them has several attractive or absorbing characters, among whom are the clever Portia, the pathetic Shylock, the shrewd Catherine, the blustering Petruchio, and the simple Touchstone. The reader marvels at the variety and individuality of the scores of persons Shakespeare has

created. If he had drawn but one of them, the engaging Falstaff, his fame would be secure. The fat knight is the greatest comic character in the whole realm of literature. It is said that Elizabeth was so charmed with his rogueries in *Henry IV* that she ordered Shakespeare to write a play showing Sir John in love. *The Merry Wives of Windsor* provided him with two simultaneous affairs, much to his discomfiture. Every time one rereads a play by Shakespeare, he realizes more fully how great was the dramatist's mastery of characterization, for each rereading reveals new traits. He was ever a student of human nature in all its phases, finding man an inexhaustible subject. Hamlet expresses his creator's view of that subject in a conversation with Rosencrantz:

> What a piece of work is a man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculty! In form and moving how express and admirable! In apprehension how like a god! The beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!

The number of familiar quotations from the plays is a testimony to the effectiveness of Shakespeare's expression. No other author has stated so well the thoughts and feelings common to humanity. By his magnificent figures of speech he has impressed his ideas indelibly upon the mind of the reader. Even his weakest plays contain passages of poetic beauty. Yet at times

Shakespeare wrote very bad verses. He had the faults common to the poets of the age, who were fond of puns and elaborate diction. That he was able to break away from these tendencies marks him as the individual genius of the Elizabethan period. According to Ben Jonson, "He was not of an age, but for all time!"

Our admiration for Shakespeare's poetry often causes us to forget that he was a practical man of the theater. His plays won him financial success because he gave the Elizabethan public what they wanted. He invested his income shrewdly and soon became the most prominent stockholder in the Globe and Blackfriars theaters. By 1597 he had made enough money to purchase New Place, the finest house in Stratford. Fourteen years later he retired to spend the rest of his life as a country gentleman. He seems to have been entirely indifferent to the fate of his plays, for he took no steps to publish them during these years of leisure at Stratford.

In 1623, seven years after Shakespeare's death, two actors of the Blackfriars company, John Heming and Henry Condell, compiled the *First Folio* from the manuscripts in the possession of the company. They included thirty-six plays, omitting *Pericles*. Their purpose was "to keepe the memory of so worthy a friend and fellow alive" by providing an edition more accurate

than the "divers stolen and surreptitious copies" printed from players' books or from stenographic notes taken down during a performance. Unfortunately, they were not so accurate as they asserted, but they deserve our gratitude for collecting the plays. The *First Folio* is the most valuable book in the English language.

About seventy-five years ago, a small group of skeptics questioned the ability of a comparatively uneducated youth from Stratford to write plays revealing such profound and varied knowledge. They also noted that the references to Shakespeare in the literature and documents of the time were very few. Surely, they argued, he should have received recognition in an age so enthusiastic about literature. Hence they concluded that the plays were the work of the most learned philosopher of the day, Francis Bacon. The Baconians have gone to all extremes to prove their theory. The reader who has come under the spell of Shakespeare's magic verse, however, cares little for their arguments. For him the tribute in Milton's sonnet is final:

What needs my Shakespeare, for his honored bones,
The labor of an age in piléd stones?
Or that his hallowed relics should be hid
Under a star-ypointing pyramid?
Dear son of Memory, great heir of Fame,
What need'st thou such weak witness of thy name?
Thou, in our wonder and astonishment
Hast built thyself a livelong monument.

The work of Shakespeare has overshadowed that of the other Elizabethan dramatists. Charles Lamb endeavored to arouse interest in them by his *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets,* and in the present century Professor Neilson has given us their best plays in *The Chief Elizabethan Dramatists.* The leader among these writers, who were accustomed to meet at the Mermaid Tavern, was Ben Jonson, the poet laureate of the court of James I. He was well versed in the classical tradition, as his tragedies, *Sejanus* and *Catiline,* show. In the *Poetaster* he imitated very convincingly the style of the Roman poets, but satirized very cleverly two of his contemporaries.

His humour plays were also written in this satiric vein. The term humour signified some mood or ridiculous trait which was characteristic of a social type. *Volpone, or The Fox* satirizes the miser; *Epicœne, or The Silent Woman* tells how Morose, who cannot bear the least noise, is tricked by his disinherited nephew; the *Alchemist* ridicules the propensity to seek advice from quacks; and *Every Man in His Humour* hits almost every fault of society. As human nature changes little from age to age, Jonson's characters are surprizingly modern.

Jonson also wrote masques for the expensive entertainments of the court. The masque was an elaborate combination of dancing, singing, in-

strumental music, and spectacular effects. It was somewhat like a modern operetta. Since the emphasis was placed upon the settings and music, the plots were very slight. Inigo Jones designed the effects for Jonson's productions, costing thousands of dollars. Some of the songs from the masques should appear more often on concert programs, for they are most charming.

Two of Jonson's friends of the Mermaid Tavern belonged to wealthy families. They were Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher, who collaborated in writing about forty plays. The plots are ingenious and complicated, but theatrically effective because of the dramatic suspense. Furthermore, their noble ladies and gentlemen converse naturally. *Philaster* and *The Maid's Tragedy* are romantic dramas of faithless love. *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* is a clever comedy about the adventures of a grocer's boy given a part in a play at the request of a citizen and his wife, who have objected to the play scheduled for that performance. It is supposed to be the type of entertainment desired by a London audience in the early seventeenth century. The hero, of course, triumphs over many obstacles by his courageous and noble actions.

Other Elizabethan dramatists have been remembered for one or two plays. George Chapman's *Bussy D'Ambois,* a tragedy of bloodshed, has some fine lines, but is too heavy. Thomas

Dekker wrote a merry comedy about London life in the *Shoemaker's Holiday,* and Thomas Heywood's *A Women Killed with Kindness* is a pathetic story of domestic life, showing considerable ability to portray emotions. A similar understanding of every-day life is evident in Thomas Middleton's *The Changeling* and *A Trick to Catch the Old One.* Another comedy, which has provided actors with a favorite part, Sir Giles Overreach, is Philip Massinger's *A New Way to Pay Old Debts.* Finally, John Webster closed the series of great blood-and-thunder tragedies with his *The White Devil* and *The Duchess of Malfi.* The latter play, dealing with the horrors of Italian intrigue in the sixteenth century, contains several powerful scenes.

The passionate scenes of the tragedies and the coarseness of the comedies written by the later Elizabethans aroused the antagonism of the Puritans. Furthermore, the dramatists had frequently ridiculed their beliefs. Therefore, when the Puritans came into power, they forbade public performances. In 1642 the Elizabethan drama came to an end. The troublous years of the Commonwealth were unfavorable to the drama, altho a few private performances were given. When the theaters reopened after the restoration of Charles II, the Elizabethan drama seemed too crude to a monarch who had spent his exile in France.

XXII

REVIVAL OF THE DRAMA IN SPAIN AND FRANCE

The English imitations of the classical drama were relatively unimportant in comparison with the national drama. Some of the Elizabethans constructed plays according to the rules of the three unities, but the majority refused to restrict the action to one theme, the scene to one place, and the time to one day. In Spain a similar revolt against the classical rules occurred. The French dramatists of the seventeenth century, however, followed them much more closely. The French critics, led by Boileau, proclaimed that the rules should never be disregarded.

The love of the Spanish people for romances, ridiculed by Cervantes in *Don Quixote,* influenced the development of the drama. They wanted plays of incidents and not character studies. Lope de Vega, the founder of the Spanish romantic drama in the fifteenth century, blamed this attitude of the Spanish people for his disregard of the classical methods. Like Shakespeare, he wrote to please his audience, "for since the crowd pays for the comedies, it is fitting to talk foolishly to it to satisfy its taste."

With amazing rapidity de Vega produced over fifteen hundred plays, many of which were comedies of political intrigue. Wonderful escapes from impending dangers held the spectators spellbound. The heroes in these sword-and-cloak comedies defended their personal or family honor against the threats of church and state. In ornate diction they voiced their noble sentiments. The humor was furnished by the comic servant, who was usually the confidant of his master. The scenes of the three acts took place in palaces, prisons, streets, or any locality favorable for exciting experiences. That there were few dull moments the readers of *The Star of Seville* well know.

De Vega's own life was almost as adventurous as those of his heroes. He ran away from school, was a soldier in the Armada, carried on numerous love-affairs, and finally entered the priesthood. His popularity was so great that when he died the ceremonies in connection with his funeral lasted for two weeks.

His successor was Pedro Calderón de la Barca. Often Calderón borrowed material from his predecessors but enhanced its dramatic possibilities. He was essentially melodramatic in his treatment of the honor motive, disregarding probability to gain effectiveness. His skill in developing tense situations has been praised by eminent writers in every European literature. Goethe

told Eckermann that Calderón's "plays are thoroughly stage-perfect; there is never a feature in them which is not designed to produce a certain calculated effect."

Besides the tragedies of jealousy, the comedies of intrigue, and the historical dramas, Calderón wrote about seventy religious plays after he became a priest. These plays, called *autos sacramentales,* were allegorical representations in one act to be performed on Corpus Christi day. The genius of Calderón was particularly adapted to this type, of which *The Divine Orpheus* is an excellent example. From his other dramatic works *The Devotion of the Cross, Life Is a Dream, The Mighty Magician,* and *The Constant Prince* might be chosen as representative. After Calderón, the Spanish drama has been of little importance in European literature until the present century.

A contemporary of de Vega and Calderón furnished Pierre Corneille with the subject of his masterpiece, *The Cid.* Guillen de Castro had dramatized the main events of the Spanish chronicle in his *Youthful Adventures of the Cid,* produced at Madrid about twenty years before Corneille's famous play aroused among the literary leaders of Paris a heated discussion concerning the three unities. As a result of that discussion Corneille adhered thereafter strictly to the rules and became the founder of the

French classical tragedy. It is certain that at times he felt the restrictions of the classical form, but he was not inclined to oppose the authority of the French Academy.

From Roman history Corneille took the characters of his greatest tragedies, *Horace, Cinna,* and *Polyeucte.* These characters struggle in terrific conflicts of passion against reason, asserting their indomitable wills. They bear their misfortunes with nobility and oppose fate with assurance. Since the conflicts are psychological, they do little but argue at great length in the Senecan manner. Corneille provided them with some of the most magnificent verses in the French language for these arguments. The dignity and power of his poetry are most suitable for the expression of the exalted ideals which formed the basis of his tragedies.

Corneille's younger rival, Jean Racine, also chose classical or biblical subjects for his tragedies. *Bérénice, Phèdre,* and *Athalie* are the best examples of his method of presenting the passions which hold sway in the feminine heart. His characters are types rather than individuals, but they are intensely human in their submission to love and jealousy.

Racine's chief faults are monotony and artificiality. His analytical treatment seems too logical and cold-blooded in its mechanical perfection. His style also reflects this strife for perfection,

for he sought to make the Alexandrine meter—rimed verses of twelve syllables—as smooth and polished as possible. Racine's position in French literature depends largely upon the beauty of his versification as well as upon his careful workmanship.

French classical tragedy is limited in its appeal because of its inherent qualities. It is difficult to appreciate in a translation the grandeur of Corneille's verses or the elegance of Racine's Alexandrines. Everyone, however, can enjoy the comedies of Jean Baptiste Poquelin, known after he turned from the law to the theater as Molière. This master of satiric comedy learned his trade during a thirteen-years' tour through the provinces with a troupe of strolling actors. When he returned to Paris in 1658, he was recognized as the principal comic actor of the day and a promising dramatist. He became a favorite at the court of Louis XIV, where his plays, ranging from the broadest farce to the most polished comedy, brought him enormous popularity. His famous satires, *Les Précieuses Ridicules (The Affected Young Ladies)*, *Tartuffe*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Médecin Malgré Lui (The Doctor in Spite of Himself)*, *L'Avare (The Miser)*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (The Tradesman Turned Gentleman)*, *Les Femmes Savantes (The Learned Ladies)*, and *Le Malade Imaginaire (The Imaginary Invalid)*, attacked the follies, vanities, hy-

pocrisies, and affectations of contemporary society. Each character is so ruled by some passion that he becomes ridiculous in his subservience to it. The titles just given suggest the chief objects of his wit.

Even his farces have the underlying purpose of pointing out some absurdity. Altho his characters are types of seventeenth-century France, they are universal in their various attitudes toward life. Pretense and vanity are as common in twentieth-century America as in the France of Louis XIV. That is why Molière is readable and actable to-day. His fertile imagination, accurate observation, and witty dialog have kept perennially fresh this "greatest comic writer of all the world."

In the next century Voltaire wrote several classical tragedies of considerable ingenuity, and Lesage produced two comedies in the manner of Molière, besides his vaudevilles and operettas. One other French dramatist of the eighteenth century has been remembered largely because his witty comedies, the *Barbier de Seville* and the *Mariage de Figaro,* supplied Rossini and Mozart with librettos for their immortal operas. The Figaro of Beaumarchais has thus outlived his political significance. The French drama, however, was generally at a low level until the romantic revival under Hugo.

XXIII

THE RESTORATION DRAMA

When Charles II returned from his exile in France, he established a court modeled upon that of Paris. Freed from the restraint of Puritanism, the drama flourished with renewed vigor. The King had licensed two theaters, which were supported by the fashionable court. Boys no longer played the feminine parts as in the Elizabethan theater. From the diary of that inveterate playgoer, Samuel Pepys, we learn many details about the performances from comments on the admirable acting of the famous Nell Gwyn to the price of seats in the pit. He seldom failed to mention the prominent people in the boxes.

The Elizabethan tragedies did not meet the approval of this court audience trained to appreciate the dramas of Corneille and Racine. Hence they were rewritten so that they would conform to the three unities. This mixture of Elizabethan tragedy and French classical drama is called the heroic play. John Dryden was the most prominent writer of this type of drama. He wrote for the theater only when he needed money, for he did not feel himself especially fitted for dramatic writing. But it offered the

highest remuneration in the early days of the Restoration.

His heroic plays are so filled with dramatic wonders that Dr. Johnson said that in them the "ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing." The theme is a struggle between love and honor. Sometimes the hero, possessing rare courage, is united to the heroine, but more often he commits suicide to save his honor. Unfortunately, he waits until he has had an opportunity to rant at great length about his misfortunes. The speeches are very artificial because they are written in the rimed heroic couplet, which Dryden thought gave the effect of the French Alexandrine. He used blank verse, however, for his best play, *All for Love*. The titles of his heroic plays suggest their exalted nature, for example, *The Conquest of Granada, Aureng-Zebe, The Spanish Friar, The Maiden Queen.*

Restoration Comedy aimed to please sophisticated London society. Hence it was immoral and cynical in tone. Virtue was ridiculed as hypocritical, while clever intrigue was advocated as the means of gaining social prestige. The promiscuous philanderings of witty gentlemen and beautiful ladies were the basis of the complicated plots. Mirabell and Millamant in William Congreve's *Way of the World* are the finest characterizations in Restoration Comedy. His brilliant dialog in this play and in *All for Love* is

as entertaining as that of Molière. From Congreve's one tragedy, *The Mourning Bride,* comes the line, "Music hath charms to soothe the savage breast."

Within the last decade several Restoration comedies have been revived with some success in New York and London. A modern audience, undisturbed by their vulgarity or frankness, finds the situations very amusing. Besides Congreve's plays, *The Country Wife* by William Wycherley and *The Beaux' Stratagem* by George Farquhar are worthy of mention.

By the end of the seventeenth century the comedy of intrigue had fallen into disrepute. The pleasure-loving Stuarts had lost the throne through the revolution of 1688 because of the arbitrary measures of James II. The more sober court of William of Orange repudiated completely the French influence. In 1698 Jeremy Collier published his *Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the Stage,* in which he criticized the drama for rewarding vice and ridiculing virtue. Congreve and others answered this attack, but the taste of the time was demanding a reformation in the drama. Clever comedy and classical tragedy no longer attracted the theatergoer.

XXIV

THE DRAMA IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The appeal of the seventeenth-century drama is primarily intellectual. We watch with interest how the characters solve their difficulties, escape their predicaments, or succumb to their fates, but we do not sympathize with them. Not until the drama was entirely freed from the dominance of the classical rules, did it appeal to the emotions. When a dramatist is chiefly concerned with construction, he tends toward artificiality. His characters act according to theories and not according to nature. No human being ever spoke the heroic couplets of Dryden or the witty lines of Congreve. Even Molière's characters are too one-sided to be entirely convincing.

The first step toward a more natural drama was the sentimental comedy. It was natural only in the sincere distress of the misjudged heroine and in the ordinary conversation of the dialog. The plots were based upon a misunderstanding which a simple question might have cleared up, but this question was never asked until the last minute. Then in the acceptable fashion of melodrama or the touching romances of the

screen, the villain was foiled, and everybody else restored to happiness. The audience, moved to tears by the pathetic situations during the course of the play, rejoiced that virtue and honesty triumphed at the conclusion. Richard Steele's *The Tender Husband* and *The Conscious Lovers* made the sentimental comedy popular at the Drury Lane Theater. They pleased the spectators not only by their emotional scenes but also by their moral purposes.

Another kind of entertainment very popular in the early eighteenth century was the Italian opera, discussed so humorously in the *Spectator*. John Gay burlesqued this importation in *The Beggar's Opera*. Instead of pastoral scenes and characters from classical mythology, Gay presented Newgate prison and the members of London's lower classes. Altho the satire of *The Beggar's Opera* is hardly evident after two hundred years, Captain Macheath, Polly Peachum, and their associates have proved real enough to pack a London theater for over a year. Gay made a distinct advance toward realistic comedy by these burlesques.

With the production of *She Stoops to Conquer* in 1773, Oliver Goldsmith took the final step by giving the English stage its first truly natural drama since the Elizabethan period. He revolted against the pathos of the sentimental drama as well as the artificiality of the comedy of in-

trigue. He believed that comedy should be funny and that it should make vice ridiculous. *She Stoops to Conquer* has been criticized for its horse-play and for its improbabilities. The horse-play, however, consists of just the kind of practical jokes Tony Lumpkin would devise. As for the improbabilities, Goldsmith once mistook the manor house of Edgeworthstown for an inn. And what young lady would not impersonate a barmaid to obtain a husband?

The comedy of manners reached its highest development in *The Rivals* and *The School for Scandal* by Richard Brinsley Sheridan. As a member of a distinguished family Sheridan was well acquainted with the artificialities of society. His love affair with the beautiful Elizabeth Lindley, a famous prima donna, might have furnished him with the material for a successful comedy, for it was most exciting. After their marriage the Sheridans entertained extensively and gathered in their drawing-rooms the political leaders. Soon Sheridan entered Parliament, where he made several important speeches.

At the same time he was writing plays for the Drury Lane Theater, which he had owned since he was twenty-five years old. He portrayed in an unforgetable manner the sentimental heroine, the hypocritical dandy, the blustering father, the pedantic matron, the good-natured prodigal, and the scandal club of fashionable society. The

names of these characters indicate their prominent traits: Lydia Languish, Sir Anthony Absolute, Bob Acres, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, Charles Surface, Sir Benjamin Backbite, Lady Sneerwell, Mrs. Candour, and Lady Teazle. But the masterpiece of that entertaining company is that "old weather-beaten she-dragon," Mrs. Malaprop, whose delightful misuse of the English language has added a new word to it—"malapropism." Perhaps these characters are too consistent in their devotion to their frivolous aims, but for sheer brilliance the comedies of Sheridan have never been surpassed in English literature. Macaulay described *The Rivals* as "an universal glare of brilliancy."

Sheridan's experience in producing plays taught him the value of dramatic suspense. The auction scene and the screen scene in *The School for Scandal* show his ability to handle a complicated situation with exceptional ease. This facility increased the dramatic effectiveness of *The Critic,* a satire of the sentimental drama. By clever distortions of the stock characters and noble sentiments of these plays, Sheridan ridiculed their absurdities. His sparkling dialog has, however, more than any other of his admirable qualities, given his comedies their lasting humor.

In Italy the chief writer of the light comedy of society was Carlo Goldoni. For several years he provided the Venetian theater with lively

pieces depicting native life. His devotion to Molière is evident in these comedies, altho he was more than a servile imitator. The last years of his life he spent in Paris, where he wrote several plays in French. Recently the Civic Repertory Theater revived in New York his *La Locandiera (The Mistress of the Inn)*. The delightful Mirandolina plays many merry pranks on her numerous admirers and never loses control of the situation. Goldoni's ingenuity in constructing such plots has won him much praise.

Molière was also the model for the Danish dramatist, Ludwig Holberg, whose travels in England, France, and Italy gave him an international point of view. He rescued Scandinavian literature from a too-narrow classicism by departing from the general custom of writing in Latin. He thereby established the Danish language as a medium for literary expression. His writings had been mainly historical and poetic before 1722, when he was appointed manager of the new theater at Copenhagen. Since there were no plays in Danish, Holberg became a dramatist in order to provide comedies for his company. In these comedies he ridiculed pretense and adherence to foreign customs. His plots are simple; his characters natural; and his action swift. On account of its influence on Lessing, *Erasmus Montanus* is Holberg's most important play. *Witchcraft* and *The 11th of June,* however, are

still popular in the Danish theater. The American Scandinavian Foundation has made his plays available in an English translation.

The last half of the eighteenth century was the golden age of German drama under the leadership of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller. With *Miss Sarah Sampson,* a tragedy of middle class life, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing inaugurated the national drama. He freed the German theater from the classical restraint of Corneille and Racine, not only by such plays as *Minna von Barnhelm* and *Nathan the Wise,* but also by his critical essays in the *Hamburg Dramaturgy.* He took for his models Sophocles and Shakespeare rather than the French classicists. Altho his characters are somewhat conventional, they are drawn from life. As he considered the stage a moral influence, his plays emphasized a social lesson. This is especially true of *Nathan the Wise,* with its teachings of toleration and brotherly love. Often his social dramas are sentimental and commonplace, but he proved that in contemporary German life there were materials for both comedy and tragedy.

The revolt started by Lessing developed into the *Sturm und Drang (Storm and Stress)* movement, so named from the title of a play by a younger dramatist. One of the main characteristics of this movement was the admiration for Shakespeare's freedom in the treatment of sub-

ject-matter. In the Shakespearian manner Goethe wrote *Götz von Berlichingen* concerning the struggle of a fifteenth-century outlaw against the tyranny of Emperor Maximilian. Young Germany hailed this play as a manifesto of the new movement because of its rapid action and vivid scenes. *Egmont* is another historical play, similar in nature to *Götz von Berlichingen*, but with a heroine of the Gretchen type. Goethe's affair with Frau von Stein and his experiences at the court of Weimar were the basis for *Iphigenie auf Tauris* and *Torquato Tasso*, psychological studies of remorse and sensitiveness.

Goethe always had considerable difficulty with the dramatic form of composition, because he lacked the talent for practical playwriting. He disregarded the theatrical effect in his tendency to philosophize. The first part of *Faust* is, therefore, a philosophical poem in a series of short dramatic episodes. Goethe began to think about the Faust legend as a subject before he was twenty-three years of age; he did not finish the drama until he was eighty-three. The theme is man's search for knowledge and contentment of mind. The final triumph of idealism over sensualism teaches that happiness results from doing good for humanity. Faust is essentially a sincere man, who is saved because he "of the right way hath ever consciousness," altho he often sins.

Faust consists of a prelude upon the stage, a prolog in Heaven, a first part in twenty-five scenes, and a five-act drama. In the prolog the Lord gives Mephistopheles permission to tempt Faust, but warns him that he will fail. The drama opens in Faust's study, where he utters his despair at man's misfortune. He turns to a book of magic and summons the Spirit of the Earth. Gaining no enlightenment from this spirit, he is about to commit suicide when the Easter song reminds him of his trusting youth. During a walk through the town with a student, he discovers that he is followed by a poodle. Alone again in his study he is still pondering on his insoluble problem of aiding mankind to attain contentment. Suddenly the poodle turns into Mephistopheles, the cynical and contemptuous devil. Mephistopheles promises Faust every experience, provided that Faust will become his servant hereafter if ever any experience causes Faust to exclaim, "Stay but for a moment." Faust signs the compact with his blood, and Mephistopheles proceeds to initiate him into the pleasures of the world.

The main episode of the first part is the pathetic story of the innocent Gretchen or Marguerite of Gounod's opera. After the death of Gretchen, Faust resides at the emperor's court, becomes the lover of Helen of Troy, assists the emperor in battle, creates a homunculus,

visits the scene of the "Walpurgisnacht," and reclaims a section of land from the sea. His plan to make this land a suitable home for mankind brings the satisfaction he has sought. But Mephistopheles loses his wager with the Lord because Faust's contentment came from an action for the good of humanity.

The symbolism in the second part of *Faust* has obscured the grandeur of its poetry. This quality, however, marks the poem as a "world drama," for it deals with the deepest problems of human existence. Goethe's message to the new age was, "He alone deserves liberty, like life, who daily must conquer it." Thus *Faust* states the modern philosophy of action. As an expression of man's striving for perfection it is the most sublime epic-drama in literature.

Johann Christoph Friedrich von Schiller aided Goethe in the management of the theater at Weimar, for which he wrote his historical dramas. When he had been a student in a military school, Schiller had identified himself with the *Sturm und Drang* movement by *The Robbers,* a radical play of revolt, leading to his flight to escape the disciplinary measures of the Duke of Württemberg. It tells how a son flees to the forest from his father's evil court and is opposed by his wicked brother in his attempted reforms. One other play written during this early period before Schiller went to Weimar

deserves mention. It is *Intrigue and Love,* a tragedy of young love thwarted by political expediency. The horrors of the French Revolution modified Schiller's republican ideas.

The trilogy on Wallenstein—*Wallenstein's Camp, The Piccolomini,* and *Wallenstein's Death*—is a study of a sincere man convinced that he is destined to be the leader of Germany during the Thirty Years' War, even tho his desire for position leads to treason. The note of fatality is apparent throughout the tragedy, for Wallenstein feels that his destiny is influenced by the stars. This dependence upon fate elicits our sympathy for him as a tragic hero.

In *The Maid of Orleans* and *William Tell* Schiller again presents characters ruled by a directing destiny. Joan's mission is to drive the usurping English from France and to crown the Dauphin. To this mission she sacrifices human love, finally giving her life to save her country. She is the simple country maiden trusting implicitly in her visions. With similar self-reliance William Tell saves the three forest cantons of Switzerland from the tyranny of the Austrian Gessler.

The aim of Goethe and Schiller to reconcile the Greek idea of art with the modern spirit was the underlying motive in their greatest dramas. It was not until the nineteenth century that the battle for freedom was finally won.

XXV

THE DRAMA OF THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

A PROMINENT characteristic of the drama of the romantic revival is the presentation of the moral conflicts within the mind. Usually the heroes are melodramatic in their passionate struggles, for they are most ardent fighters or lovers. In lyrical outbursts they disclose the emotions which sway them. Victor Hugo, the leader of romanticism in France, described the purpose of the romantic drama in the preface to *Cromwell:* "It would lead the audience constantly from sobriety to laughter, from mirthful excitement to heart-breaking emotion." At its best the romantic drama gives us magnificent scenes; at its worst it descends to sentimental melodrama.

The production of Hugo's *Hernani* in 1830 marked the triumph of romanticism on the stage. The subtitle, *Castilian Honor,* suggests its theme, the suicide of a noble Spaniard to uphold his honor. Since he kills himself as he is about to be married to his beloved, the climax is particularly tragic. Hugo's plays are impressive because of their intensity and poetic quality, but they are loosely constructed, with little re-

gard for probability. They are operatic in their grandeur and passion.

For their plots the romanticists often turned to history and legend, because these sources provided colorful incidents. They were seldom strictly accurate in the treatment of fact or the interpretation of character, as they endowed their heroes with their own idealism. Thus Heinrich von Kleist's *Prince of Hamburg* reflects the attitude of the author, who committed suicide when he was thirty-four years old. Prince Friedrich is both a coward and a daring soldier. *Käthchen von Heilbronn* is a drama about medieval knighthood, in which Käthchen saves her lover. She is Kleist's ideal love. In the *Hermannsschlacht* we have his ideal of patriotism expressed through the story of the victor over the Roman Legions commanded by Varus. The historical Arminius becomes in this play the savior of the German people.

Richard Wagner fostered this national spirit in his great *Ring des Nibelungen*, based on medieval legends. Before the composition of the *Ring* he had written three romantic dramas, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Tannhäuser*, and *Lohengrin*, showing the conflict between the powers of good and evil. By her devotion the faithful Senta releases the Flying Dutchman from the curse of eternal wandering; while the pure Elizabeth saves Tannhäuser from the contamina-

tion of the Venusberg by her death. In *Lohengrin* the heathen powers are represented by the sinister Ortrud and her husband Friedrich von Telramund, who have accused Elsa von Brabant of murdering her brother. The mysterious Swan Knight appears to be her champion, but departs on their wedding day because, persuaded by Ortrud, she has asked his name. He does, however, defeat the wicked couple by restoring the brother.

The myths of the Teutonic race furnished the material for the dramas of the *Ring*. The theft of the Rhine gold from Alberich the Nibelung brings death to the Volsungs, Siegmund and Siegfried, and finally the *Twilight of the Gods*. Romantic elements, such as the voice of the forest bird and the magic fire surrounding Brunhilde's mountain, are woven into this trilogy of primitive passions. Even the gods cannot control the forces they have set in motion. Their doom is inevitable, for vengeance has been their principal motive. At the conclusion Brunhilde announces the new age with her words, "Let there now be only love."

Tragic fate is the theme of Wagner's greatest drama, *Tristan and Isolde*. In her determination never to wed King Mark, the imperious Isolde has decided to poison herself and Tristan before the ship reaches Cornwall. But her maid disobeys her order, substituting the love potion for the

poison. In the second act the hopeless lovers are discovered by the king's hunting party, a member of which wounds Tristan. Having returned to his old home in Brittany, Tristan is dying from his wound and his despair when Isolde comes to cure him. In an ecstasy of joy he dies in her arms. The fervor of the lovers, the nobility of Mark, and the faithfulness of Tristan's follower, Kurneval, are the main reasons for the emotional appeal of this great love tragedy. Furthermore, Wagner wrote for this opera his most sublime music. Nothing in the realm of music has surpassed the marvelous pathos of the Love-Death.

The Mastersingers of Nürnberg resulted from Wagner's belief in the romantic doctrine that true art was to be found among the people. It is a merry comedy about how a knight gained admission into the guild with the aid of the genial cobbler, Hans Sachs, and won the charming Eva. Wagner's last drama, *Parsifal,* is an interpretation of the Holy Grail legend in terms of religious mysticism.

Wagner's majestic music and his enormous influence upon the opera have been so prominently discussed that few realize his importance in the German drama. Many writers dismiss him with the remark that he belongs to music. His productions at Bayreuth, however, were the source of several reforms in the German theater.

In many respects Wagner's *Ring des Nibelungen* is similar to *The Golden Fleece,* a trilogy written about thirty years previously by the Austrian dramatist, Franz Grillparzer. Medea, the central figure in the drama, cannot escape the curse placed upon the Fleece. Continually she strives to subdue her wild spirit after she has yielded to her love for Jason and left her land. At last, after several calamities, she bids Jason farewell and takes the Fleece back to Delphi. The dominant note is one of pessimism. Grillparzer's characters always struggle in vain against external circumstances beyond their control. They must renounce their love, as in *Sappho,* or perish by it, as in *The Waves of Love and of the Sea,* a version of the legend concerning Hero and Leander. Napoleon's failure to accomplish his ambitious plan was the inspiration for *King Ottokar's Fortune and Fall* and *The Dream Is a Life,* altho the first is a historical drama of Bohemia and the second a romantic dream of a country lad. Grillparzer concluded that "the quiet peace of the soul and a breast free of guilt" were more to be desired than the pangs of love or the restlessness of ambition.

The Danish dramatists, Johann Ludwig Heiberg and Henrik Hertz, wrote in accordance with German models but treated their subjects as realistically as possible. Heiberg's *Hill of the Elves* and Hertz's *Svend Dyring's House* are

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national dramas based on ordinary life in the Middle Ages. The majority of their work, however, was composed of comedies and vaudevilles, patterned after those popular on the Parisian stage. In their attacks upon current follies they are decidedly obsolete, however amusing they may have been in their own day.

During the romantic revival, the English theater was distinctly mediocre. The dramas written by the poets were not meant for the stage, while the melodramas written for production were not literature. Occasionally a playwright would rise above the general level with such a play as Dion Boucicault's *London Assurance*. But even the best of these dramas have been forgotten, with the exception of Bulwer-Lytton's *Lady of Lyons* and *Richelieu*. In spite of its very apparent faults *Richelieu* retains its place in the repertory of great actors because the leading part offers several dramatic possibilities.

The remoteness of the historical dramas and the unreality of the melodramas make them extremely theatrical. In subject they are as far removed from life as the classical drama they superseded. Also the characters are either too noble or too wicked to be convincing. Their problems are outside the realm of ordinary experience. Therefore, the romantic drama has held the stage more by the splendor of its emotional climaxes than by its portrayal of life.

XXVI

THE MODERN DRAMA

Some modern dramatists aim to present the experiences of every-day life with no attempt at selection, regardless of the sordidness of detail. They neglect plot, character development, and construction, for they are primarily concerned with showing us life as it is. Others discuss the social and individual problems which have arisen from our complex modern civilization. The drama of ideas has thus assumed a prominent position in contemporary literature. Still others are essentially psychologists analyzing both normal and abnormal types. Another group, descendants of the writers of eighteenth-century comedy, satirizes cleverly the social foibles. A few still follow the method of the romanticists and give us historical dramas or imaginative plays, less melodramatic but yet remote from actual life. Finally there are the symbolists and expressionists, suggesting ideas by unusual methods.

Many dramatists have experimented with several forms, both old and new. They have used choruses in the manner of Greek tragedy and set-backs in the manner of the motion picture. The possibilities offered by modern staging and

lighting have given them resources hitherto unknown to the drama. Every means for obtaining the effect they desire has been put at their disposal. They have even been assured an audience by such organizations as the Theater Guild. The result has been great activity in the field of the drama, with many interesting plays and a few distinguished ones.

It is customary to say that the modern drama begins with Henrik Ibsen, but before he wrote his social dramas the reaction against romanticism had begun. His direct predecessor is Christian Friedrich Hebbel, whose *Judith,* produced in 1840, stresses the moral conflict in the heroine's soul. While the subject is romantic, the treatment is modern. *Maria Magdalene,* "a tragedy of common life," shows the effect of a young girl's betrayal and suicide upon her proud father. His world crashes when he is faced with reality. *Herodes and Marianne, Agnes Bernauer,* and *Gyges and His Ring* are also psychological studies of characters troubled with moral problems. Hebbel's solution invariably leads to death as the means of escape. His dramas are so well planned and so logically developed that they became models for the new German drama.

About the same time Émile Augier, Alexandre Dumas *fils,* and Victorien Sardou were producing in Paris their satires and studies of society. Augier's *Adventuress,* Dumas's *Camille* and *Le*

Demi-Monde, and Sardou's *Rabagas* are the best examples of the different points of view from which these dramatists analyzed society. Augier upheld honesty and virtue; Dumas discussed ethical problems with unusual frankness; and Sardou ridiculed follies. All of them had an admirable sense of dramatic construction as well as a gift for writing brilliant dialog. Only when they allowed the didactic purpose to predominate, did they fail in dramatic effectiveness.

A study of the French drama taught Ibsen the value of a simple situation and the importance of dialog. From Hebbel he derived his method of presenting human nature and its problems. His purpose was to point out the obstacles which hindered the individual from living his own life in a conventional society. He stated his view in these words: "So to conduct one's life as to realize one's self; this is the loftiest attainment of man." In the conflicts of individuals with conventions he found the material for his social dramas.

Ibsen's work may be divided roughly into two groups, the plays of symbolism and the social dramas. Among the first are *Peer Gynt, The Master Builder,* and *The Lady from the Sea.* Peer Gynt, a selfish and restless youth, leaves his Norwegian home to seek adventures in the world. At last he returns disillusioned to the waiting Solveig. This fantastic play is a satire

upon that trait in human nature which finds the distant more attractive than the familiar. Hilda in *The Master Builder* represents the younger generation demanding its kingdom from the older. Ellida in *The Lady from the Sea* desires freedom to determine her choice. At times the symbolism becomes strangely mystical, as in *When We Dead Awaken.* Hence some scenes are extremely bewildering.

The first of the social dramas to bring Ibsen definitely before the European public was *A Doll's House.* This play was widely discussed because the heroine refused to remain shackled by the conventional idea of marriage. Nora leaves her home so that she may have an opportunity to be herself and not remain the mere servant of her unappreciative husband. Ibsen was accused of undermining the foundation of society—the sacredness of marriage—for in 1879 the doctrine that woman's place was in the home was universally accepted. In *Ghosts,* Ibsen answered these attacks by showing the results of Mrs. Alving's remaining in the home with a faithless and dissolute husband. She has bowed to the demands of a conventional morality, but her life has been one long falsehood. The tragic consequences are revealed in the powerful conclusion of the last act.

The wrongness of the majority is pointed out in *An Enemy of the People.* Dr. Stockmann's

fellow citizens drive him from his home because he has dared to disclose that the baths, to which the town owes its prosperity, are polluted. In a similar manner Ibsen's uncompromising statements of the truth had been attacked. About this play he wrote to the Danish critic Brandes: "I hold that that man is in the right who is most closely in league with the future." He refused to be silent about the evils he observed, regardless of the storms of abuse; for, like Dr. Stockmann, he had discovered that "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone."

One of Ibsen's greatest dramas belongs to neither group. According to his own story, *Hedda Gabler* is a character play. "What I chiefly tried to do," he said, "was to paint human beings, human emotions, and human fate against a background of some of the conditions and laws of society as it exists to-day." Hedda is the most baffling of his heroines. Some people agree with Bernard Shaw's characterization in *The Quintessence of Ibsenism* that she is "mean, envious, insolent." Others think that she was a modern energetic woman condemned to inactivity by the conditions of her time and was consequently misunderstood. At least she was bored with an existence from which she escaped only by suicide. The play concerns her attitude toward those about her and her reactions to her surroundings.

Ibsen's emphasis on realism and on character affected greatly the development of the modern drama. Dialog became more natural, because the flowery speeches of the romantic drama seemed absurd in comparison with his colloquialisms. The problems of contemporary life and the crises in the lives of ordinary individuals were chosen as the most suitable subjects. Plot was subordinated to a study of character, and often the solution was left to the audience. The drama of ideas replaced the drama of sentiment.

When Ibsen left Norway in 1864, Björnstjerne Björnson succeeded him as director of the theater in Christiania. He had already written a trilogy about Sigurd, the Icelandic hero, and a *Maria Stuart,* in which he showed his tendency to psychological treatment. In his social dramas, such as *The Editor, A Bankruptcy, Leonarda,* and *The New System,* he preached moderation and restraint. His political activity for an independent and reformed Norway is also reflected in these plays. The comedies of domestic life, particularly *The Newly-Married,* were very popular because of his sympathetic humor.

The Swedish dramatist August Strindberg had no sympathy for his characters. He said: "I wear no rosy glasses and drink no sugared water. I draw my people as they are, and if they emerge as swindlers, hypocrites, and smug citizens, it is their own fault." Half insane, he

believed that everyone was conspiring against him. In his dramas he poured out his violent hatred of mankind. *The Father* and *The Dance of Death* are very powerful in their terrible realism and sincerity.

The literary revival during the last part of the nineteenth century in Germany brought success to two dramatists of more than national significance. These were Hermann Sudermann and Gerhart Hauptmann. Altho Sudermann wrote the majority of his plays during the twentieth century, his first successes, particularly *Honor, Magda,* and *The Vale of Content,* written before he was forty, are his more profound work. He seemed to be out of touch with the newer ideas. Three great actresses, Modjeska, Bernhardt, and Duse, interpreted Magda, a daughter who, returning to her home after a long absence, finds she has outgrown it. His characters are drawn from accurate observation and depicted with admirable clearness.

The heroes and heroines of Hauptmann's realistic plays, *Lonely Lives, The Weavers, Drayman Henschel,* and *Rose Bernd* suffer from circumstances beyond their control. They are the victims of a social system or a thoughtless action, which has placed them in an uncongenial position. His figures all have a definite personality. Hauptmann also wrote a poetic drama, *The Sunken Bell,* on the folk-tale of the

bellfounder under the spell of the nymph, Rautendelein. After his bell sinks in the lake, he leaves the world for the mountain home of the fauns and elves. But the tones of the bell, representing the voice of his conscience, recall him. The theme of the drama is thus Heinrich's struggle between his desire and his duty.

The symbolism of the writers of the expressionist school is far more difficult to comprehend and often very confusing. Their dramas are a succession of scenes, revealing more or less clearly the impression made upon persons by their experiences. They endeavor to express states of mind and to indicate the inner meaning of life. Examples of these dramas are Georg Kaiser's *From Morn to Midnight,* Ernst Toller's *Man and the Masses,* and Franz Werfel's *The Goat Song,* produced in America by the Theater Guild.

In Austria, Arthur Schnitzler has subtly depicted the disillusioned society of Vienna in such plays as *Light o'Love* and *The Lonely Way.* He is somewhat given to the discussion of morbid problems. Another Austrian dramatist of talent, Hugo von Hofmannsthal, is known primarily as the librettist for *Der Rosenkavalier, Electra,* and other operas by Richard Strauss. In his poetic imagery he is a descendant of the romantics.

The Theater Guild has introduced to American audiences two other contemporary dramatists

of Central Europe, the Czecho-Slovakian Karel Capek and the Hungarian Ferenc Molnar. Capek's imaginative *R. U. R.* and fantastic *The World We Live In* are indictments of a mechanistic and scientific age. He suggests that in our eagerness to gain efficiency we neglect the element of human understanding. Even the robots, mechanical workers, are not so completely mechanical that they can be absolutely controlled. The machine may turn against its creator.

Molnar once told a visitor that he is "first and foremost a journalist." That statement accounts for his penetrating observation and feeling for dramatic situations. He has sought material in fashionable society, in artistic circles, or in the slums. Since he allows the characters to control the story, they reveal their motives by their actions. In *The Guardsman* the hero, pretending to be some one else, courts his own wife. *Liliom, The Swan,* and *The Play's the Thing* have equally effective situations, for Molnar is theatrically minded. His first purpose is to entertain, but underlying the entertainment is a vein of genial satire.

Modern Russian drama is so closely associated with the Moscow Art Theater that it is necessary to understand the aims of this organization for an appreciation of Russian dramatic literature. Every member of the company is vitally inter-

ested in giving an accurate interpretation of the author's meaning. There are no stars. An actor may play a minor rôle one night and the principal rôle the next. All their efforts are directed toward presenting a complete illusion of reality. The spectator is not conscious of the fact that he is in a theater, for he sees perfectly natural action upon the stage. Great emphasis is placed upon detail to secure this effect. Hence modern Russian drama is intensely realistic.

When the Moscow Art Theater produced Anton Chekhov's *The Seagull* in 1898, they saved for the drama one of its greatest writers. Chekhov had vowed never to write another play after the failure of *The Seagull* at the State Theater of St. Petersburg. Inspired by the intelligent productions of this company, he wrote for them *Uncle Vanya, The Three Sisters,* and *The Cherry Orchard.* These dramas deal with the failure of persons to understand each other and their inability to adapt themselves to changed conditions. Often the characters are so wrapped up in their own thoughts that they fail even to attend to the conversation of the others in the room. Hence they make irrelevant remarks prompted by their absorption in their own affairs. This failure to understand produces gloom and hopelessness. Chekhov's plays are atmospheric and undramatic.

Following the manner of Chekhov and Maxim Gorky's *The Lower Depths,* Leonid Andreyev wrote his realistic dramas of Russian life. These, however, attracted less attention than the symbolical dramas, *The Life of Man* and *He Who Gets Slapped.* Andreyev is a pessimist, declaring that all is vanity. Humanity is continually being slapped in the face by life. He employs rhetorical speeches and theatrical devices to bring out this philosophy. *He Who Gets Slapped* made an excellent motion picture because of its element of melodrama. *Katerina* and *The Waltz of the Dogs* are even more morbid in their depiction of the ruin of sensitive souls through suspicion and disappointment. In Andreyev there is a strain of Byronic romanticism.

The combination of romanticism and symbolism is also the chief characteristic of the dramas by the Belgian poet, Maurice Maeterlinck. His creed is: "The great secret, the only secret, is that all things are secret." Hence many elements of mystery and mysticism give to his plays an unearthly atmosphere. Conflicting destinies bring unavertable catastrophes, altho some character, usually an old man, realizes the outcome of the struggle he is watching. From this observation is drawn a philosophical lesson. *Pelléas and Mélisande* and *The Blue Bird* are Maeterlinck's most widely known plays. The first is a series of dramatic sketches, in which

the story is suggested rather than told. The reader receives the impression that the young lovers are unconscious victims of fate. Its fairy-like quality and fanciful humor have endeared *The Blue Bird* to children. For adults, however, its lesson is that happiness lasts only for the moment when self-sacrifice brings happiness to others. In a book on the mysticism of *The Blue Bird,* Maeterlinck stated the cardinal principle of his philosophy: "The unknown and the unknowable are and perhaps always will be necessary to our happiness."

The popular success gained by Edmond Rostand's *Cyrano de Bergerac* has proved that realism and symbolism have not entirely excluded historical romance from the stage. Cyrano's devotion to his honor, his marvelous courage, his quick wit, and his pathetic death have moved thousands to admiration and affection. Brian Hooker has given us an excellent English translation, which retains the spirit of the original. Walter Hampden has made Cyrano and his famous nose as familiar to American audiences as Coquelin did to the French. *The Eaglet* and *Chanticleer* display Rostand's faults more clearly than *Cyrano,* but they are almost as effective on the stage. Rostand may be theatrical and superficial; he may resort to rhetorical flourishes; yet he does provide relief from the problem play.

Eugène Brieux began his career as a realist, but soon turned to the problem play. He is sincere in presenting moral and social problems. He does, however, become dull, because he subordinates dramatic intensity to the moral purpose. Often one of his characters will deliver a lecture on the idea expounded in the play. Brieux attracted attention to his plays by somewhat suggestive titles, such as *The Red Robe* and *Damaged Goods.*

During the first years of the twentieth century the leader in modern Italian drama was Gabriele D'Annunzio. His fame was due in large measure to that great interpretative genius, Eleonora Duse, who acted in his *La Gioconda, The Dead City, Francesca da Rimini, Daughter of Jorio,* and other plays during her tours in Europe and America. D'Annunzio's absorption in the arts is reflected in these dramas, for he perceives life from the artist's point of view. He gives to his characters his own predominant traits. Therefore, his dramas reveal the soul of a morbid artist sensitive to beauty rather than the more universal feelings of normal humanity. In them the classical idea of an inevitable destiny is strangely combined with modern psychological introspection. The unpleasant themes, together with the unreality, have limited the appreciation of D'Annunzio's work. He is too literary for the majority.

In the reaction against D'Annunzio's subjective method, Luigi Pirandello has taken an important part. As a follower of Ibsen he presents problems. These problems are, however, philosophical and not social, for Pirandello dramatizes an idea. When his *Six Characters in Search of an Author* was produced in New York, it was advertised as a play not for morons. The manager in this play asks concerning Italian drama: "What else can I do, if there are no more good comedies to be had from France, and we are reduced to putting on those of Pirandello, which nobody can make head or tail of and which he wrote on purpose just to make fun of you and me and the public?" *Six Characters* is a revelation of the difficulties the dramatist encounters in the creation, the production, and the reception of a play. *Right You Are If You Think You Are* brings out the idea that truth for the majority is an individual interpretation of objective facts. One group believes the hero insane; another is equally certain that his mother-in-law is insane, while the wife exclaims when she is asked to settle the question of her identity: "I am the daughter of Signora Frola, and the second wife of Signor Ponza. Yes, and—for myself, I am nobody . . . For myself I am—whoever you choose to have me." In his other plays Pirandello is continually asking "What is the truth?" He seeks to tear off the masks by show-

ing the contrast between the apparent and the real.

About 1875 José Echegaray started a revival of the Spanish drama with his somewhat melodramatic plays. He depended upon stage effects to emphasize situations arising from an overbearing exercise of will power. *The Great Galeoto,* a character study, has alone retained its original success among all the plays by Echegaray and his followers.

The intellectual drama was introduced into Spain from France and Italy by Jacinto Benavente. He is concerned primarily with the influence of contemporary civilization upon the individual. Thus Julio in *In the Clouds* breaks away from limiting surroundings. *The Bonds of Interest* unfolds the plan of an ambitious youth to become a partner in a bank and to win a millionaire's daughter. Other plays, such as *The School of Princesses,* present the aristocratic or middle class society of Madrid in a mildly satirical fashion. Benavente's characters express their ideas at length in monologs and conversations, which reveal their true reactions toward life as well as the author's philosophy. They are all seeking happiness, and they find it by different means, but only after they have gained mastery of themselves.

Gregorio Martínez Sierra has a more sympathetic interest in his characters. They are in-

dividuals and not general types expressing ideas about current problems. The plots of *The Cradle Song* and *The Kingdom of God,* two plays recently produced in America, are most simple. They deal with incidents in the lives of nuns in their care for the body and soul of the unfortunate. Yet Sierra has given these ordinary incidents a dramatic intensity.

During the last quarter of the nineteenth century the English theater-goer was entertained by the comic operas of W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan and the plays of Arthur Wing Pinero, Oscar Wilde, and Henry Arthur Jones. Gilbert's *H. M. S. Pinafore, The Mikado, Iolanthe, Pirates of Penzance, Princess Ida,* and *Patience* contain the most arrant nonsense, the most improbable situations, and the most remarkable persons. They are, however, good fun with amiable dashes of satire directed against dignified institutions or serious movements. Sir Arthur Sullivan's music has contributed much to their continued success on the stage.

After some experience as an actor Pinero began his career as a dramatist with his farcical comedies. In these comedies he places a dignified person in a compromising situation, such as the plight of Mr. Pasket in *The Magistrate.* Later he wrote social plays having a serious aim and tragedies revealing the efforts of persons to

overcome past errors or serious weaknesses of character. Among the former are *Trelawney of the Wells* and *The Gay Lord Quex,* while the latter include *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray, Iris,* and *The Thunderbolt.*

Wilde's drawing-room plays, *Lady Windermere's Fan* and *The Importance of Being Earnest,* are exceedingly brilliant in dialog and cynical in tone. They are, however, a trifle too clever. The problem plays of Jones, of which *The Case of Rebellious Susan, The Liars,* and *Mrs. Dane's Defense* are representative, are rather melodramatic but are effective on the stage. Since it is the literary fashion at present to deride the late Victorian era, these dramas are generally undervalued. They were, nevertheless, important in introducing the problem play into England.

Altho Pinero and Jones were indirectly influenced by Ibsen, they did not become such ardent followers of the Norwegian dramatist as the young Bernard Shaw. From the publication of his *Quintessence of Ibsenism* in 1891 until to-day, he has been continually before the public, because he is a great self-advertiser. He has said: "In order to gain a hearing it was necessary for me to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic, with the license of a jester. My method has, therefore, been to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say and then

say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is that I am in earnest." His creed seems to be, "Whatever is, is wrong." All the things that are wrong in contemporary civilization are discussed in his highly diverting dramas.

Mrs. Warren's Profession informs us that society has been responsible for prostitution, because woman has not been able to attain economic independence until the present century. As long ago as 1894, *Arms and the Man* pointed out the foolishness of resorting to war. *Candida* is a satire on British conventions in general as well as on the ordinary triangle plays. *Major Barbara* reminds us that "poverty is the prime social sin." In *Man and Superman,* Tanner expresses many more of Shaw's ideas on socialism, which have finally been expounded in full in *The Intelligent Woman's Guide to Socialism and Capitalism.* This volume he calls his "last will and testament to humanity."

Shaw also delights to humble the mighty. *The Man of Destiny, Cæsar and Cleopatra,* and *St. Joan* emphasize neglected traits in the characters of these famous figures and make them less admirable than other treatments have done. Furthermore, these plays give him an opportunity to ruffle the English complacency by many clever remarks at England's expense. Scientific theories have received his attention in *The Doctor's Dilemma, Pygmalion,* and *Back to*

Methuselah; religion in *The Devil's Disciple* and *Androcles and the Lion;* society in *Getting Married* and *Heartbreak House;* and politics in many of these plays, but especially in his latest, *The Apple Cart.* No field of activity or person can escape the Shavian criticism.

More astonishing still is the fact that Shaw makes his audiences think. They go home to read the prefaces to the published plays for further enlightenment. These prefaces are often as long as the plays, and sometimes as entertaining. He keeps preaching his doctrines and forcing persons to face unpleasant facts, but no one is offended. His plays are static, with their generalizations and interminable conversations. His characters are intellectual types in conflict with their environments. He has disregarded the laws of dramatic technique and transformed the theater into a schoolroom. What, then, is the secret of his success? Shaw himself has told us: "With an unprecedented pertinacity and obstinacy I have been dinning into the public head that I am an extraordinarily witty, brilliant, and clever man. That is now part of the public opinion of England; and no power in heaven or earth will ever change it."

A very different dramatist is James M. Barrie. He does not ask his audiences to think about problems, but only to pretend that they are in an imaginative world, where very surprizing

things may happen. *Dear Brutus* shows us what would happen if persons had a chance to live their lives over again. *Peter Pan* requires that we believe in fairies and the Never Land. *The Legend of Leonora* dramatizes motives and impulses. *The Admirable Crichton* suggests that the position of master and servant might be reversed to advantage in some circumstances. Sometimes the persons in Barrie's plays pretend that they are other people. Phoebe Throssel in *Quality Street* poses as a non-existent niece in order to attract her former lover, and the pathetic girl in *A Kiss for Cinderella* makes her life tolerable by identifying herself with the heroine of the fairy story. So Barrie requests us to forget our difficulties for three hours and allow our imagination to be reawakened.

Humor is also a very valuable quality in Barrie's estimation. *What Every Woman Knows* proves that laughter may save a husband from a fatal mistake. Maggie Shand knew that John's great fault was his lack of this saving quality. Barrie's charm depends largely upon his subtle humor, his sympathetic satire, his sly wit, and his delightful whimsicality. As Mrs. Page, the actress in *Rosalind,* tells the admiring youth, "All life's a game." Barrie aids the reader to play the game of imagination with him, since he has given very full and very amusing stage

directions. Thus his plays are almost as interesting to read as to see.

John Galsworthy, on the other hand, employs the drama to call attention to serious social injustices. He always has deep sympathy for the sufferings of the lower classes or the misunderstood. In practically every play the plot develops from the contrast between those powerful because of wealth or position and the unfortunate persons coming into contact with them. He reiterates the fact that we do not have one standard for all classes. Hence prejudices and conflicts arise. *The Silver Box, Strife, Justice, The Pigeon, The Mob, The Skin Game, Loyalties, Old English,* and *Escape* deal with the different aspects of modern social conditions. These plays suggest that a more satisfactory state of affairs will come only when there is a better understanding among all groups.

Since the twentieth century has been a most active period in the theater, numerous other English writers have produced plays of merit. Among them are Lord Dunsany's romantic plays of terror and wonder, *The Gods of the Mountain, A Night at an Inn,* and *If;* John Drinkwater's historical dramas, *Abraham Lincoln, Oliver Cromwell,* and *Robert E. Lee;* St. John Ervine's realistic *John Ferguson;* Stephen Phillips's poetic *Paolo and Francesca;* and Milne's light comedies, *Mr. Pim Passes By* and

The Dover Road. Every reader should be able to find an interesting play in such a varied assortment.

If he wishes, however, something mystical and legendary, he can find it in the plays of the Irish Renaissance. In 1899 the Abbey Theater of Dublin was founded for the production of the national dramas. William Butler Yeats, John Millington Synge, and Lady Augusta Gregory supplied this theater with plays based upon ancient Irish folk-tales and upon the peculiarities of Irish life. Their frank portrayal brought forth considerable discussion, and Synge's *Play Boy of the Western World* caused riots in several American theaters where it was produced. Yeats's *The Land of the Heart's Desire* and *Kathleen ni Houlihan* or any one of Lady Gregory's *Seven Short Plays* leave a lasting impression of beauty and sincerity. Whoever has been fortunate enough to see the Irish players in a characteristic production will not soon forget that performance.

During the nineteenth century the American theater imported dramas and actors from England or produced imitations of English plays by native playwrights. At the close of the century Clyde Fitch gained an initial success with his historical play, *Beau Brummell,* with Richard Mansfield as the hero. His social plays, particularly *The Truth,* proved that American society

offered suitable material for the realistic drama and brought a renewed interest in the native drama.

Eugene O'Neill, the most widely known of present-day American dramatists, has taken his material from the daily lives of workers. While he was convalescing from an illness in 1913, he read Ibsen and Strindberg, whose influence is apparent in the early plays. O'Neill has stated that his purpose is to "explain the nature of my feeling for the impelling, inscrutable forces behind life which it is my ambition to at least faintly shadow at their work in my plays." He is a student of psychology, showing the effects of these forces upon individuals. *Ile* is a study of determination. *Emperor Jones* portrays the results of superstitious fear on the mind of a negro. In *Beyond the Horizon* a dreamer fails to gain happiness because he is tied to a farm, from which only death brings him release. O'Neill's heroes often struggle against social conditions or personal desires. Yank in *The Hairy Ape* seeks vainly to find his place in human society. Abbie Putnam in *Desire Under the Elms* is a victim of her own craftiness. The tragedy results from the failure of the characters to obtain the goal for which they are striving. This failure is usually due to their inability to understand themselves or others.

O'Neill's later plays are symbolical as well as

psychological. They all concern man's search for satisfaction by various agencies, such as beauty (*The Fountain*), creative power (*The Great God Brown*), business efficiency (*Marco's Millions*), joy in life (*Lazarus Laughed*), emotional experiences (*Strange Interlude*), or a new god (*Dynamo*). Man does not acquire happiness because he is thwarted in the expression of his personality and defeated in his aims by contemporary ideas. As Kubla remarks in *Marco's Millions,* "he has not even a mortal soul, he has only an acquisitive instinct."

O'Neill has derived some of his stage innovations from the Greek tragedy. His own plays leave with us almost as deep an impression concerning an inevitable fate. Their sincerity and originality have contributed largely to the advancement of American drama and have brought it recognition in Europe.

To what extent the drama may be changed by competition with the talking motion pictures it is impossible to determine. Undoubtedly there is a place for both in the modern theater. No matter how clear the picture and voice on the screen may be, or how talented the actor, the spectator misses the living personality of a great interpreter. The drama may learn valuable lessons from the motion pictures, but it will never be replaced by them if it obeys the command "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature."

XXVII

EPIC AND EARLY NARRATIVE POETRY

Poetry is the oldest form of literary expression. Long before man wrote down his thoughts, he expressed his feelings in rhythmical language. To commemorate the deeds of legendary or contemporary heroes, the bards recited poems to accompaniment of the lyre at festivals or banquets. Each bard handled the existing material freely, rejecting or adding sections as the occasion demanded. These poems were handed down by word of mouth from generation to generation. Finally someone combined them into a long narrative poem. Such was the origin of the folk-epic. Its various sections were produced by the people during several generations. A literary epic, however, is the work of a single poet, who uses the traditions and legends for a definite purpose.

The oldest extant epics in European literature are the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. By the ninth century B. C. a large amount of poetry about past events, historical or mythical, had been accumulated in Greece. The most popular poems were undoubtedly those concerning the Trojan War, for the ten years' conflict to recover the beautiful Helen furnished many stirring inci-

dents for the bards. At this period one of the poets collected these heroic narratives and composed the *Iliad* with the wrath of Achilles as the central episode. During the next century additions were made by others until the *Iliad* became the epic which has come down to us. The same bard may have written the main episodes of the *Odyssey*. The extant form, however, probably dates from the seventh century B. C. Tradition has assigned the composition of these epics to a blind bard named Homer, about whom we know nothing.

The *Iliad* is a somewhat disjointed account of the concluding year of the Trojan War. Achilles sulks in his tent because Agamemnon takes a captive girl. He does not fight again until his best friend Patroclus is killed. Then he avenges the death of Patroclus by killing Hector. The *Iliad* concludes with the burial of Hector. The gods and goddesses figure prominently as the protectors of the various heroes on both sides. To the modern reader the dignified Hector seems more noble than the impulsive Achilles, and the faithful Andromache is more appealing than the flirtatious Helen.

Finally Troy was captured through the craft of Odysseus, who conceived the idea of the wooden horse. The *Odyssey* relates his adventures during the years spent in wandering before he reached his home, the island of Ithaca. By

trickery he escapes from many dangers only to find his house overrun by suitors for the hand of his wife, Penelope. She has remained faithful, putting off the suitors from day to day. Odysseus kills them and is happily reunited with his family. The *Odyssey* is a more unified poem than the *Iliad* because it has one central hero and one central theme. The incidents are more varied, and the action is more rapid. Furthermore, Odysseus's experiences with Polyphemus, Circe, Calypso, and Nausicaa appeal to the reader because of the humorous touches. As the poet understood human nature thoroughly, Odysseus is one of the most natural figures in all literature.

The Homeric poems are direct and simple narratives. Before the reader, passes a series of splendid pictures revealing the courage of heroes, the hardihood of seamen, the beauty of women, the faithfulness or disloyalty of wives, the adventures of wanderers, the sadness of separation, and the joy of reunion. In his essay, "On Translating Homer," Matthew Arnold stated four truths "essential for him who would have a right conception of Homer." He says: "Homer is rapid in his movement, Homer is plain in his words and style, Homer is simple in his ideas, Homer is noble in his manner." The translations which bring out these qualities most satisfactorily are the *Iliad* by Lang, Leaf,

and Meyer, and the *Odyssey* by Butcher and Lang.

Unlike the Homeric poems, Virgil's *Æneid* is a very carefully composed literary epic with a definite purpose. Virgil proclaimed the greatness of Rome and praised the ancestors of his emperor. He expressed the national spirit with patriotic fervor. The Romans believed that they were descended from the Trojans, who had come to Italy after the fall of Troy. Virgil tells how Æneas, the son of the goddess Venus and the warrior Anchises, led these wanderers and founded a kingdom in Italy.

Virgil borrowed episodes, descriptions, and similes from Homer. The gods direct Æneas in his undertakings just as they aid Odysseus. Both heroes visit Hades to consult the spirits, delay their journey because of attractive women, and finally triumph over apparent unsurmountable difficulties. Virgil's hero, however, is less human. He is rather indifferent to the emotions and seems to have no will of his own. He places himself in the hands of fate, praying and sacrificing to the gods for guidance. In fact, all the characters in the *Æneid,* with the exception of Dido, are somewhat mechanical or shadowy. Dido's intense passion and despair at the departure of Æneas make her story the most vital episode in the poem. Another famous section is that

describing the descent to Hades, where Æneas sees the great Romans destined to follow him.

Since Virgil hated war, his battle scenes are very poor. The combats lack vigor, for he had no interest in them. He was forced, however, to include them because they formed an essential element in a story of conquest. They also added to the glory of the powerful Roman nation. The emphasis on this theme assured the poem an immediate and permanent reputation, which is based largely on the masterly handling of episodes and the brilliant lines. Virgil spared no pains to make the poem as perfect as persevering labor could make it. In 19 B. C. he decided to visit the scenes of the Trojan War in Asia Minor and then to spend three years in a complete revision of the manuscript. He requested his friend Varius to burn the poem should anything happen to him on this journey. He did not live to carry out his plan, but fortunately Varius did not keep his promise to destroy the *Æneid*. At the command of Augustus this famous Latin poem was preserved to bring glory to Rome and the homage of centuries to Virgil.

From the seventh to the thirteenth centuries folk-epics concerning the national heroes were gradually assuming permanent form among the various European peoples. In these poems there is a fusion of pagan and Christian elements, for

the monks who copied the early manuscripts inserted lines or episodes to modify the original tone. But even in the epics composed around Christian heroes like Charlemagne traces of racial traditions continually appear. Therefore, these poems are valuable repositories of the thoughts and ideals inspiring peoples who were emerging from the Dark Ages to found the modern nations.

The Old English epic *Beowulf* probably originated in songs sung by the gleemen before the Angles and Saxons left the Continent. It is composed of four parts: Beowulf's fight with a monster, Grendel; his fight with Grendel's mother beneath the waters of a dark lake; his fifty years' reign, and his last fight with a dragon. Throughout the poem runs the idea that men are powerless against Wyrd (fate), which determines their actions. The tone is stern and harsh but vigorous in the recital of brave deeds. Beowulf is the savior of his people, the mighty hero unsurpassed in strength, since he has supernatural powers to combat the forces of evil. Perhaps the most stirring section is that describing the young Beowulf's swimming match with Breca. This thrilling account reveals the qualities the Anglo-Saxons demanded their ideal hero should possess.

In *Beowulf* the customs of the Anglo-Saxon races are preserved in detail. Apparently the

struggle for existence dominated their lives. Nature threatened them with the monsters lurking in dark forests and gloomy fens. The only pleasure they had was eating and drinking in the mead hall, where they listened to tales of heroic deeds and received gifts from the kings. Seldom were they free from some dread. Nowhere in the epic is there any reference to the kindlier aspects of nature. This ever-present sense of danger fostered a serious attitude, which is reflected in the moral tone and the Christian interpolations in the epic.

Similar to *Beowulf* in some of its incidents is *Grettir the Strong,* an Icelandic saga. Grettir was an outlaw and robber, whose great bravery and gigantic strength won him fame. Other sagas or Eddas tell stories about the gods or the adventures of Norse heroes. They are filled with marvelous feats, clever tricks, family feuds, simple explanations, fierce combats, and ghostly visitations. The supernatural plays a prominent part in these poems, because the Icelanders believed in the malevolent power of fiends and in curses. Even the gods cannot escape. From the Franks the Norseman learned the story of Siegfried and Brynhild and incorporated it into their own legendary lore, adding several romantic incidents.

Siegfried was, however, a German hero. His exploits were celebrated in the great Germanic

epic, *The Nibelungenlied.* The first part relates the wooing, marriage, and murder of Siegfried, the second tells how his widow, Kriemhild, revenged the murder. The poem embodies ideals of loyalty and nobility, for Siegfried is no longer a pagan hero but has become a valiant knight. Many Christian elements have, therefore, been included along with the older pagan beliefs. Altho the supernatural parts are retained, they are subordinated. The elaborate descriptions of the activities and even the clothes of the knights and ladies bore the modern reader, but they were duly appreciated by the medieval audiences. Occasionally a scene is enlivened by tragic intensity or grotesque humor. *The Nibelungenlied* is a triumphant expression of the German faith in the righteousness of just revenge.

The national epic of France, *The Song of Roland,* was originally a simple poem composed in the eighth century to celebrate an incident in Charlemagne's campaign of 778 in Spain. By the eleventh century the poem had been elaborated into a stirring account of how Roland with a few followers gave battle to the Saracens in the Pyrenees. Betrayed by the treachery of his stepfather, Ganelon, the hero is too proud to summon aid until it is too late to save himself and his companions. His impetuous courage and loyalty to his emperor are admirable, but

his thoughtlessness is deplorable. The poet contrasts him with his noble cousin, Oliver. "Roland is brave, and Oliver is wise." The story is told swiftly and vigorously in a simple style. Several impressive passages, such as Roland's death, and many effective lines make *The Song of Roland* the greatest epic of Christian chivalry.

Ruy Diaz de Bivar, called El Cid Campeador (the Lord Champion) because of his victories over the Moors, became the Roland of Spanish literature. *The Cid* recounts his adventures after his exile from Castile and his vengeance upon the unworthy husbands of his daughters. The hero is kind and generous as well as brave and fearless. His noble qualities win him the regard even of his enemies. The great Soldan of Persia sends gifts to him and seeks his friendship. Since the Spaniards were continually fighting the Moors, the sections of the epic dealing with mighty feats of arms are the most vigorous. *The Cid,* therefore, was extremely popular outside of Spain in an age exalting courageous achievements and courteous actions.

The most important medieval epic and in some respects the most remarkable poem in all literature is Dante's *Divine Comedy.* The inspiration for this masterpiece and for Dante's *New Life* was Beatrice Portinari. He adored her with all the chivalrous devotion of a medieval lover and worshiped her as his patron saint.

In the *New Life* Dante describes in prose and poetry his emotions when he saw Beatrice or heard some fact concerning her. After her death in 1290 he determined to write in her honor a poem in which he should "say concerning her that which has never been said concerning any woman."

In 1302 Dante was exiled from Florence when his party suffered defeat. For the remaining years of his life he wandered from court to court in northern Italy. His prose works, written in Latin, discuss politics and government. Dante desired a united Italy, in which the emperor should be recognized as the head of temporal affairs and the pope as supreme ruler in ecclesiastical matters.

The *Divine Comedy* is a difficult poem to read, because Dante refers to so many historical and contemporary events and alludes to numerous classical myths. He was a great scholar and student of philosophy and theology. To understand his magnificent vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Heaven the reader must have a comprehensive knowledge of life and thought in the Middle Ages. The *Divine Comedy* is the epitome of medieval culture.

Interpreted literally, this epic is an account of Dante's journey through Hell and Purgatory with Virgil as his guide, and through Heaven in the company of Beatrice. In Hell he hears the

stories of the sinners condemned to eternal torment; in Purgatory he learns how atonement is made for sin committed on earth; and in Heaven he observes the rewards granted to the virtuous. But the poem is more than a vivid description of a vision. In a dedicatory letter to Can Grande, Dante wrote: "The object of the whole work is to make those who live in this life leave their state of misery and to lead them to a state of happiness." Allegorically, then, the *Divine Comedy* shows man's struggle against sin. At first he is led by Reason (Virgil), but Reason cannot teach him the highest wisdom, the contemplation of God. Revelation (Beatrice) alone can give man an understanding of divine love, "the love which moves the sun and other stars."

The *Divine Comedy* is constructed on the mystic number three. The three parts are divided into thirty-three cantos nearly equal in length, with an introductory canto in the *Inferno.* There are nine circles in the *Inferno,* nine ledges in the *Purgatorio,* and nine spheres in the *Paradiso.* The Empyrean or Highest Heaven surrounds all. Furthermore, the meter is based on three rimes, the *terza rima,* and each stanza contains three lines. The second line rimes with the first and third of the next stanza. Technically the poem is a marvel of composition.

Dante wrote the *Divine Comedy* in Italian

so that it might be read by the common man as well as by the educated clergy. He raised the Tuscan dialect to the position of a literary language and made it the standard speech for the educated classes. Through Dante's influence Florentine culture spread not only throughout Italy but also to the neighboring nations. Carlyle characterized him as "world-deep," for he reaches the heart of every man who will make the effort to comprehend him.

The *Inferno* contains more famous passages than the other parts because Dante found in Hell persons whose tragic stories have a universal appeal. Paolo and Francesca, Ulysses, and Count Ugolino are the most striking figures, for the poet has characterized them with rare skill. The moral and philosophical discussions in the *Purgatorio* and *Paradiso* lessen considerably the general interest in them. Also they have few memorable lines, such as the words written over the gate of Hell: "All hope abandon, ye who enter here!"

When Longfellow translated the *Divine Comedy* into English, he wrote two sonnets as a preface for his translation. The concluding lines of the second are a splendid tribute to Dante's genius:

> Ah! from what agonies of heart and brain,
> What exultations trampling on despair,
> What tenderness, what tears, what hate of wrong,

What passionate outcry of a soul in pain,
Uprose this poem of the earth and air,
This medieval miracle of song!

Besides the medieval epics there are a vast number of contemporary narrative poems dealing with the adventures of Charlemagne's knights, the Arthurian legends, classical stories, the lives of the saints, and the current conditions. Altho all these poems were popular, the Arthurian legends seem to have been the favorites throughout Europe. In France, Marie de France and Chrétien de Troyes adapted the material to conform to traditional ideas concerning courtly love. Marie had lived in England at the court of Henry II, whose Queen, Eleanor of Aquitaine, was an authority on courtly love. Her *lais* on Arthurian and other subjects are simply and delightfully told. Arthur O'Shaunessey has freely translated several into English. Chrétien's chief poems are *Knight of the Lion, Eric and Enid, Knight of the Cart,* and *Percevale.*

The last poem was a source for Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival,* written in German about 1200. Wolfram gave to the legend of the Holy Grail a deep spiritual significance. His work has more strength and naturalness than the typical court poems. Another German poet, Gottfried von Strassburg, described the overwhelming power of love in his *Tristan.* Altho he took his

material from French sources, he treated it with more sincerity. Consequently his poem has an earnestness which these lack.

The finest Middle-English poem on the Arthurian stories is *Gawain and the Green Knight*. From the very beginning it is filled with dramatic suspense. The challenge to a beheading contest, the consternation of the court when the Green Knight picks up his severed head and rides off, Gawain's journey to the Green Chapel, his experiences at the castle, and the explanations about them after he has met the Green Knight, who only wounds him, are told swiftly and effectively. Gawain is not quite the perfect knight, because he accepts the green girdle altho he resists the love-making of the knight's wife. Throughout the poem the religious tone is mingled with the mystery motive.

The period in English literature when *Gawain and the Green Knight* was written is called the Age of Chaucer from its most illustrious poet. As a boy Geoffrey Chaucer was a page in the household of Lionel, Duke of Clarence. Later he was attached to the king's household. From 1370 until a few years before his death he received various appointments in the diplomatic and civil service. His missions to France and Italy brought him into contact with the literatures of those nations and directly influenced his work. For Chaucer poetry was an avocation

to be pursued as a relief from the trials of his busy days.

His early poems are not very original, because he merely imitated the French love poetry or applied it to a special purpose, as in *The Boke of the Duchesse.* After his first visit to Italy, he wrote the *Hous of Fame* and the *Parliament of the Foules,* which are somewhat more individual but still show his dependence upon foreign models. His first great poem, *Troilus and Criseyde,* is also derived from an Italian source, Boccaccio's *Filostrato.* Chaucer, however, made numerous changes in the story and gave far more attention to the delineation of character. Hence the poem has been praised as a psychological study of a wise and cunning woman, a scheming and cynical old man, a romantic and philosophical youth, and a self-reliant man of action.

If Chaucer had written only these poems, he would be considered an interesting figure in medieval English literature but not a world poet. His *Canterbury Tales,* a collection of stories from various sources, has placed him in the front rank of great narrative writers. In the Prologue he describes twenty-nine pilgrims who had assembled at the Tabard Inn in Southwark to go on the spring pilgrimage to the Shrine of St. Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. These men and women belong to every social class and represent

many occupations. In a few lines Chaucer has characterized each pilgrim with rare skill and good humor. The knight, the prioress, the monk, the friar, the merchant, the student, the plowman, the miller, the wife of Bath, and all the others are exceedingly human in their attitudes and prejudices. The stories they tell while they travel with the merry host of the Tabard as guide also reveal Chaucer's power of observation. Even when he retells a conventional tale, he gives it new life. By using the Midland dialect for his *Canterbury Tales,* he made it the standard for modern English. His language is difficult, but his lively descriptions will repay the reader for the effort to master it.

Chaucer's friend, whom he addresses as "O Moral Gower" in the closing lines of *Troilus and Criseyde,* wrote in Latin, French, and English. His English poem, *Confessio Amantis,* was a storehouse of plots for the Elizabethan dramatists. These stories are too lengthy and too rambling as well as too didactic to hold the interest. Also they lack definite characterization. They are, however, distinctly representative of the allegorical poetry which delighted fourteenth-century readers.

Another allegory is Langland's *Vision of Piers the Plowman,* preaching a doctrine of salvation by good works. Piers, the simple worker, leads the company to truth after he has finished

his plowing. The poem contains references to contemporary events, emphasizes the hardships suffered by the poor, and satirizes social and religious conditions. Langland advises people to do their work honestly instead of going on pilgrimages. In the concluding section he is identified with Christ.

Contemporary conditions are also described in the ballads, written down probably in the fifteenth century, altho many are much older. They were handed down by word of mouth from father to son and usually altered by each reciter. Since they are the poetry of the people, they express the ideas and feelings of the community. They tell impersonally a simple, direct story with few comments. The repetitions and refrains made them easier to learn, while the dialog increased greatly their naturalness. Professor Child collected about three hundred English and Scottish ballads, dealing with border conflicts, domestic tragedies, supernatural occurrences, and Robin Hood's adventures. This outlawed hero was most popular because he played tricks on the sheriff, robbed the wealthy merchants and monks, but aided the poor. The wholesome humor and delightful spontaneity of the ballads betray their communal origin.

The literary epics of the Italian Renaissance are deadly dull because their stories move so slowly. The forty-six cantos of Lodovico

Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* tell about numerous adventures which have little relationship to the central episode, the madness of Orlando. The poet has interspersed elaborate digressions in praise of the House of Este, whose dukes were his patrons. He pretended that Ruggiero and Bradamante, his chief characters, were the ancestors of this house. He inserted the various subordinate episodes to keep these lovers apart until the end of the poem. Ariosto's merits are his fertile imagination, his directness in narration, and his endeavor to reach perfection by constant revision. The *Orlando Furioso* expresses the sensuous and romantic ideas dominating the Italian Renaissance.

When he was seventeen years old, Torquato Tasso published his *Rinaldo,* an imitation of Ariosto. His long epic, *Jerusalem Delivered,* is a story concerning the capture of the Holy City by the Crusaders. In minor episodes, more or less unrelated to the main theme, Tasso employed the supernatural to gain impressive effects. His main purpose was to pay homage to the religious fervor actuating the Crusaders. As he had a sensitive and melancholy temperament, he treated most sympathetically the characters in the romantic episodes. Shortly after he completed this poem, he suffered from recurring attacks of insanity, brought on by the feeling that his work was not appreciated at the court.

The discoveries made by Vasco da Gama furnished Luis de Camoens with material for his *Lusiads*. Since Camoens had spent seventeen years in exile in India, he could describe from experience the scenes visited by his hero. This fine epic of Portuguese valor became an inspiration for his countrymen when they were attacked by the Spanish. Furthermore, it has revealed the musical quality of the Portuguese language.

By 1550 the age of chivalry had almost passed. The English poet Edmund Spenser tried to revive its spirit by his *Faerie Queene,* written "to fashion a gentleman or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline." He planned to relate in twelve books the adventures of twelve knights representing the twelve virtues. These adventures were to take place on the twelve days during the annual feast held by Gloriana, the Faery Queen. Spenser finished only six and a half books of this astounding task. The poem is, moreover, a religious, political, and moral allegory designed to teach man his duty by inspiring examples.

Spenser borrowed many episodes from Ariosto but gave them a new significance. He used old words and archaic forms to create a romantic atmosphere. He also invented the Spenserian stanza, which was admirably fitted for a sustained effect. On account of his magnificent descriptions, colorful imagery, and musical verse,

Charles Lamb called him "the poet's poet." The *Faerie Queene* reflects the spirit of the age but fails to make a universal appeal because it lacks variety and vitality.

John Milton also sought in his *Paradise Lost* to teach a lesson. He wished to "justify the ways of God to men." *Paradise Lost* is the sublime epic of Puritanism, expounding the Calvinistic doctrines in long arguments. It begins with the expulsion of the rebel angels from heaven, describes their plans for revenge, relates how Satan tempted man, and closes with man's fall and departure from the Garden of Eden. A great Milton scholar, Professor Masson, has thus characterized the poem: "Whatever else *Paradise Lost* may be, it is certainly one of the most learned poems in the world." Into it Milton placed the knowledge he had gained from Cambridge, from his Italian journey, and from his extensive reading.

The hero of the poem is Satan, for he is the only character in whom the reader has any interest. His unconquerable courage and clever schemes win our admiration. Even tho he directed his activities against man, we do not regret that he succeeded. He is superb in his acceptance of his fate:

> Which way shall I fly
> Infinite wrath and infinite despair?
> Which way I fly is hell; myself am hell.

> And in the lowest deep a lower deep,
> Still threat'ning to devour me, opens wide
> To which the hell I suffer seems a heaven.

Then he asserts his determination to follow evil:

> So farewell hope, with hope farewell fear,
> Farewell remorse; all good to me is lost.
> Evil, be thou my good.

Paradise Regained, which recounts Christ's victory over the tempter, has little of the majesty of its predecessor. Milton's dramatic poem, *Samson Agonistes,* does, however, contain many impressive passages. The blind Milton could well understand the agony suffered by the captive in the Philistine prison. In one of his finest sonnets Wordsworth has eulogized the great Puritan poet's attitude toward life:

> Thy soul was like a Star, and dwelt apart:
> Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea:
> Pure as the naked heavens, majestic, free,
> So didst thou travel on life's common way,
> In cheerful godliness; and yet thy heart
> The lowliest duties on herself did lay.

During the eighteenth century Friedrich Gottlieb Klopstock was hailed in Germany as the new Milton. Posterity has decided that his *Messias* was far overrated by his contemporaries. Its twenty cantos contain too much theological discussion and too little action and characterization. Yet Klopstock's influence upon

German poetry through this epic and through his patriotic odes marks him as the forerunner of the nationalist movement in German literature.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries several poets wrote mock-epics. They applied the grand style and the machinery of the classical epics to some trifling incident. The most famous mock-epic is Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*, a very witty satire on female frivolities. The theme was most suitable to Pope's particular genius. His clever epigrams and brilliant satire portray perfectly the artificial life in the days of Queen Anne.

After the eighteenth century few poems were written in imitation of the classical epics. The reaction against their artificial style and heroic themes discouraged poets from attempting such sustained efforts on a grand scale. The long narrative poems written during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have only slight similarities with these earlier poems, altho some have been designated as epics. Modern poets have approached their subjects from a more personal point of view even when they have treated heroic actions.

XXVIII

DIDACTIC AND SATIRICAL POETRY

According to Dr. Johnson the poet should be "the interpreter of nature and the legislator of mankind." Some poets have considered this to be their main function. They have, therefore, aimed to instruct either directly or indirectly. This didactic purpose may be praiseworthy, but in the majority of instances it has weakened a poem if it has predominated. An excellent poem may be spoiled by a moral tag, such as the concluding stanzas of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*

The appeal of moral, philosophical, and satirical poetry is almost entirely an intellectual one. Often the reader feels that the poet could have given his message much more directly in prose. Yet in a poetic age the writer may be forced to disseminate his ideas by this means. Or he may be able to express himself more easily in poetry. Sometimes he uses the poetic form as a disguise for his satire. Many moral and satirical poems are merely literary curiosities, but a few have a permanent place in literature.

A universally popular form is the fable, which draws a moral lesson from an experience of a man or an animal. The Greeks ascribed their

fables, originally written in prose but preserved in the poetic version of Babrius, to Æsop. It is a question whether Æsop ever existed, but he was supposed to have lived about the sixth century before Christ. At least, in classical times the fables were widely known and frequently collected by both Greek and Latin authors.

In the Middle Ages, Æsop's name was also attached to various collections. Other poems in a similar vein were the Fabliaux. These have been defined as "the recital, for the most part comic, of a real or possible event occurring in the ordinary conditions of human life." Some ridicule, in rather free language, the knights, the clergy, the peasants, and especially the feminine sex. Another group deals with the adventures of Reynard the Fox, whose cunning extracted him from numerous difficulties. In these tales the moral is generally subordinated to the humorous or narrative interest.

From all sources Jean La Fontaine drew the material for the twelve books of his *Fables Choisies Mises en Vers*, published between 1668 and 1693. His artistic treatment of this material earned for his fables a lasting reputation. His narrative style is simple but varied, and his satire is genial. In his poems we have the fable at its best.

Whereas the moral is secondary in the fable, it is the chief feature of philosophical poetry.

The poet desires to give practical or ethical rules for conduct. The earliest extant didactic poems in European literature were written in Greece about the middle of the eighth century B. C. The Greeks ascribed them, together with numerous similar poems, to Hesiod, about whom many fictitious stories arose. The *Works and Days* tells farmers and sailors when they should perform certain tasks. To illustrate his points Hesiod recounted appropriate stories, such as the legend concerning Pandora, the first woman. The *Descent of the Gods* is a religious text-book, describing the creation and explaining Greek mythology. These poems are primarily valuable for their accounts of the customs and beliefs among the early Greeks.

The most remarkable poem in Latin literature gives a scientific exposition of the universe. Lucretius anticipates the atomic and evolutionary theories in several passages in his *Of the Nature of Things,* altho he also credits some amusing errors. The poet's purpose was to remove the fear of death by showing that all the universe is composed of material particles in various combinations. When these particles separate, material things disintegrate. He rejects the idea of a future life with the words "the soul's dissolved, like smoke, into the lofty winds of air." Furthermore, he states that religion has brought unhappiness because it is

based on the superstitious belief that the gods are concerned with human affairs. He traces the rise of man from nature to civilization and discusses his relationship to the universe, sympathizing with him in his struggles and sufferings. *Of the Nature of Things* is thus a summary of Epicurean philosophy in great poetry. William Ellery Leonard's English translation, which retains in a large measure the excellence of the original, is recommended to readers desiring a knowledge of this philosophy.

The didactic poems written during the Middle Ages would fill volumes, for in verses the clergy taught religious truths, the schoolmen debated theological and philosophical points, and the secular writers composed allegorical arguments about courtly love. The modern reader finds the majority of these dull and confusing on account of their interminable discussions. Occasionally a striking passage will relieve the monotony, but these sections are rare. The Old English poem, *Christ,* by Cynewulf, contains some beautiful lines and dramatic pictures of the Nativity, Ascension, and Last Judgment. It reveals better than any other medieval religious poem the sincere reverence which characterized the Christianity of the age.

A typical representative of the love allegory is the French *Roman de la Rose,* translated into English by Chaucer. For more than two hun-

dred years this poem, containing over twenty-two thousand lines, retained its popularity throughout Europe. By a dream allegory the authors, William de Lorris and Jean de Meung, expound the art of love in its entirety. The first part has some very beautiful descriptions, but the second is overburdened with long speeches by Reason to convince the lover that the disadvantages of love are more numerous than its pleasures. Stories and quotations from classical sources as well as references to current ideas make the *Roman de la Rose* a veritable compendium of medieval knowledge. As Jean de Meung satirized the tendencies of the day, it is a valuable source book for the student of the period.

To understand satirical poetry, unless it is directed against universal faults in human nature, the reader must know something about the conditions which inspired it. Hence political and personal satires have become almost unintelligible if they are not edited with copious notes. This is, however, not so true concerning social satire, because similar conditions recur at different historical periods. The Rome of the emperors, for example, was not so very different in its essential characteristics from the New York of the mayors.

Martial came to Rome from his native Spain to seek a patron. He presented his *Book of Spec-*

tacles to Titus at the celebration of the inauguration of the Colosseum, perhaps in the hope of gaining royal favor. This book and his twelve books of epigrams give an excellent idea of Roman society in the first century. He used the epigram to flatter a patron, to congratulate a friend, to describe a dinner, or to rail against contemporary vices. He declared his purpose in the following lines:

> 'Tis my constant care
> To lash the vices, but the persons spare.

All types feel the lash, since Martial had a keen eye for follies. He preferred a quiet country life to the gaiety of the capital and finally returned to Spain. His sharp wit and terse style appealed to the eighteenth-century writers, who considered him the world's greatest epigrammatist.

The conditions in Rome were so bad that Juvenal declared that "it is difficult not to write satire." He was a realist presenting life from all angles. He introduced his satires with this statement: "All that men do, their hope, fear, wrath, pleasure, joys, and gaddings make up the medley of my book." His attacks on extravagance and licentiousness are harsh and caustic. His later satires deal in a somewhat milder tone with abstract subjects. He points out the value of parental example in bringing up

children and states that virtue is true nobility. Juvenal looked with alarm at the tendency of the newly rich to ape Grecian customs. He preached the doctrine of Rome for the Romans.

Despite his coarseness and exaggeration, Juvenal has been universally admired for his descriptive ability. By the choice of pertinent details he presents a clear-cut picture. His fiery diction gives color and vitality to his descriptions. Dr. Johnson adapted two of the satires to eighteenth-century England under the titles, *London* and *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. With a few changes in names Juvenal's satires would describe conditions in modern New York.

The neo-classic revival in the European literatures of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries produced several powerful satirists. Dryden, Pope, and Goldsmith in England and Parini in Italy wrote the best-known poems in this manner.

After the Restoration John Dryden supported the new government, which he had praised in *Astræa Redux* at the return of Charles II. His *Annus Mirabilis* describes the Dutch War, the great fire, and the plague of 1666, and is enlivened with an occasional satiric remark. His powers as a satirist, however, were not fully displayed until *Absalom and Achitophel, The Medal,* and *Macflecknoe*. The first two poems, directed against the Earl of Shaftesbury, who

had been tried for treason but acquitted, contain some excellent portraits of his contemporaries. Dr. Johnson said: "There is no need to inquire why those verses were read, which to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the cooperation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment." Dryden had no personal grudge against these politicians but merely wished to disclose their intrigues. *Macflecknoe* is, on the other hand, a personal attack upon the poet Shadwell, who would be entirely forgotten if it were not for Dryden's line, "But Shadwell never deviates into sense."

Besides the satires, Dryden wrote two didactic poems, expounding the doctrines of both the Anglican and the Catholic Churches. The reason he defended both churches was that he became a Catholic in 1687. Therefore, *The Hind and the Panther*, a beast fable in form, controverts the arguments he had previously used in *Religio Laici* to recommend the Anglican Church. Neither poem shows any deep religious conviction. Dryden's ingenuity in argument and vigor in satire have kept his poetry alive.

Alexander Pope used satire to revenge himself upon his enemies. Unamiable and sensitive, he quarreled with most of his contemporaries and alienated his friends sooner or later. The fact that he recognized the qualities of greatness in

those he satirized adds to the sting of his words. He knew exactly where to direct his thrusts. In the *Dunciad* and the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot,* Pope abused his critics and the persons he thought had tried to injure his reputation.

His *Essay on Man* discusses the relation of man to the universe, to himself, and to society. It is a versification of the deistic philosophy based on the theory that "whatever is, is right." The poet advised man not to bother with the problems of the universe but to endeavor to understand himself.

> Know then thyself, presume not God to scan,
> The proper study of mankind is Man.

Pope polished and refined the heroic couplet until it was a perfect medium for the expression of his ideas. The classical precision, terseness, and balance of this meter set forth his keen wit to the best possible advantage. Hence his couplets have been quoted more frequently than the lines of any other English poet except Shakespeare. This fact substantiates his statement that

> True wit is nature to advantage dress'd,
> What oft was thought, but ne'er so well expressed.

In the next generation Oliver Goldsmith sought to prove by a survey of mankind in *The Traveler* that happiness cannot be found anywhere. In this discussion of European civiliza-

tion he gave practically no place to natural scenery, altho the Swiss mountains, the Italian lakes, and the Dutch canals furnished the background. *The Deserted Village* is another argumentative poem on the thesis:

> Ill fares the land to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates and men decay.

Goldsmith criticizes social customs and shows in contrasting pictures the results brought by changing conditions upon the happy life of a flourishing village. The poem is read to-day for its delightful characterizations, its expression of sympathy for the poor, and its descriptions of nature. Goldsmith looked back with affection to his youth in Ireland. Through a haze of sentiment he described Sweet Auburn with its kindly parson and respected schoolmaster.

Probably Giuseppe Parini had read Pope, for his *The Day* reflects the spirit of the English satirist. It depicts the morning, afternoon, evening, and night of a fashionable young Italian in Milan. Parini points out how the frivolous society wasted its time. His expert handling of blank verse caused a later Italian poet to call him "the Virgil of Modern Italy."

Since the eighteenth century didactic and satirical poems have lost popular favor because the romantic revival taught readers to expect an emotional and personal note in poetry.

XXIX

LYRICAL AND PASTORAL POETRY

A LYRIC is a short poem, musical in style and personal in tone. The writer expresses subjectively his emotional reaction to his experiences. Originally the term was applied by the Greeks to poetry recited to the accompaniment of the lyre. To-day it is used to designate many forms of poetry besides songs. Even prose may be lyrical, provided it has a musical cadence. A pastoral describes rural scenes and customs. Many pastorals contain narrative or dramatic passages, which serve to add a romantic glamour to an idealized rustic existence. Seldom do the pastorals suggest that there are any hardships in country life. When they do mention the severer aspects, they emphasize the compensating peacefulness and simplicity.

Only fragments of early Greek lyric poetry have come down to us. Apparently from references in later works a number of poets writing during the sixth and seventh centuries B. C. were held in great honor. Alcæus, Sappho, and Anacreon have been particularly praised. Horace imitated many poems by Alcæus and spoke of him as a great poet. Alcæus participated in politics at Mytilene and was exiled for

some years. His political poems describe a warrior's hall, the ship of state, and the strife between the parties. In another group of poems to be sung at banquets he extolled the pleasures of wine.

Sappho, addressed by Alcæus as "Violet-tressed, pure, softly-smiling Sappho" and called by Plato the "Tenth Muse," is generally considered the world's most inspired feminine poet. According to a legend, she cast herself into the sea in despair when the handsome Phaon rejected her love. On the island of Lesbos she conducted a school for girls interested in poetry, who seem often to have been indifferent to her instruction. She was primarily a poet of love, passionately singing about its pleasures and pains. She also composed hymns in honor of Aphrodite and bridal songs for the weddings of her friends. The Sapphic stanza is most effective in its simple beauty, as Swinburne has demonstrated by his use of it. With all her passionate ardor Sappho at times could express tender feeling, as in the following poem:

> All that the glittering morn hath driven afar
> Thou callest home, O evening star!
> Thou callest sheep, thou callest kid to rest,
> And children to their mother's breast.

Since Anacreon was not so independent as Alcæus, he enjoyed the patronage of the tyrants, Polycrates and Hipparchus. The court life suited

him exactly, for he liked ease and comfort. His graceful poems praised his patrons or entertained their guests. They express the joy and optimism of youth or regret its passing. Anacreon's light verse was imitated by many successors, whose poems, collected under the title *Anacreontics,* were long believed to be genuine.

Another type of Greek lyric poetry was the ode in honor of victors at the various athletic contests. Simonides of Ceos developed this form by introducing a myth concerning the heroes or gods. His poetry has ease and pathos but little vigor. In 1896 twenty poems by his nephew, Bacchylides, were discovered in Egypt. The longest is an ode celebrating the victory won by the horse of Hiero, ruler of Syracuse, at the Olympic games. The others are either odes of victory or lyrical poems based on myths. Bacchylides strove for technical perfection and elegance in style. He seldom attained the dignity of his younger contemporary Pindar.

Forty-four odes by this greatest lyric poet of Greece have been preserved from the seventeen books collected by Alexandrian scholars. Pindar came from Thebes to Athens, where he studied choral composition. Later he spent some years at the court of Hiero of Syracuse. His fame was so great that his services were constantly demanded by princes or wealthy men. For Pindar poetry was an exceedingly profitable profession.

He celebrated victories won in every sport at the Olympian, Pythian, Isthmian, and Nemean games. A Pindaric ode begins with a reference to the victory, then relates some myth connected with the victor's family or native city, and concludes with a moral lesson. It was sung by a chorus, which performed a rhythmic dance during the singing of the first two stanzas, the strophe and antistrophe, but stood in a special formation during the epode. The composition of the poem is limited by this elaborate form, for the stanzas must be carefully balanced and the poem must contain three stanzas or some multiple of three. Pindar so mastered this difficult form that Matthew Arnold coined the word "Pindarism" to designate the power of style and praised the magnificent imagery and noble expression of the odes. He said: "Pindar is a poet on whom, above all other poets, the power of style seems to have exercised an inspiring and intoxicating effect."

After Alexander conquered Egypt, he built the city of Alexandria, which became the literary center of the Grecian world during the third century B. C. Here Ptolemy founded the famous library containing 700,000 manuscripts and encouraged learned men to gather at his court. The most important Alexandrian poet is Theocritus, the master of the idyl, a little picture of pastoral life. In his *Idyls* he often incorporated

the folk-songs sung at the festivals in his native Sicily, where the shepherds strove to win a carved bowl or lamb. From these contests he obtained his subjects, such as the lament of the forsaken lover, the lover's devotion to his beloved, and the dirge for the dead shepherd. He also adapted from them the recurring refrain. The chief quality in the *Idyls* is their realistic descriptions of nature. Neither Virgil nor any other imitator in ancient or modern European literature has been able to surpass Theocritus in this respect.

The fifteenth idyl, *The Festival of Adonis,* is a masterpiece of realistic dialog and clever characterization. It describes in amusing detail the experiences of two Syracusan women, who go to Ptolemy's palace to see the beautifully decorated image of Adonis and to hear a famous artist sing the hymn in his honor. In its freshness, truth to human nature, and humorous situations it is so natural that it has a universal appeal. Gorgo and Praxinoä might be two American ladies going to the Metropolitan Opera House to hear their favorite soprano.

The principal source for Greek lyric poetry from the sixth century B. C. to the sixth century A. D., is the *Anthology,* or "collection of flowers," discovered at Heidelberg in 1607. The original collection was made in the first century B. C. by Meleager, who called his book the *Gar-*

and. Five other writers added to the work as they transcribed it, until over four thousand short poems were included. Since the poems touch every mood and experience, the *Anthology* gives us a complete résumé of Greek thought and feeling.

Virgil imitated the Greek idyl in his ten *Eclogues,* which are largely conventional descriptions of the experiences and loves of the shepherds. They do, however, indicate that Virgil appreciated nature and enjoyed the peaceful life on his farm in Northern Italy. A further indication of Virgil's interest in rural life is the *Georgics,* written at the suggestion of Mæcenas to encourage farmers to restore the lands devastated by the wars. The poem discusses the tilling of the soil, the cultivation of trees and vines, and the care of cattle and bees. But it also contains some discerning descriptions, such as that of spring, and some entertaining legends. Virgil always preferred the quiet of the country to the pleasures of Augustan society.

Catullus enjoyed the gay life in the capital, to which he had come from Verona hoping perhaps for a more appreciative audience. In 61 B. C. he met Clodia, the attractive wife of the governor of Cisalpine Gaul. For the next four years she was, under the name of Lesbia, the inspiration for his poetry. He extols her beauty, rages against her fickleness, and finally deter-

mines to drive her image from his mind. He decided that "women's promises are writ in water" and went to Bithynia to forget his Lesbia.

In other poems he gives his impressions formed on these travels and hurls invectives against politicians. His longer poems on marriage and the devotion of lovers lack the simplicity and passion of the shorter pieces. Catullus was at his best when he was reflecting his sensitive feelings and passionate reactions to his experiences.

This ardent personal note is almost entirely lacking in the poetry of Horace. He accepted life philosophically, gaining from the swiftly flying moments whatever enjoyment he could. He realized that life is transitory and death is inevitable, but this knowledge did not disturb his equanimity. All he asked was:

> Health to enjoy the blessings sent
> From Heaven; a mind unclouded, strong;
> A cheerful heart; a wise content;
> An honored age; and song.

His friendship with Mæcenas, the patron of literature, brought him many blessings, among which was the famous Sabine farm. This friendship was purely a social relationship, for Horace cared nothing for politics. He even refused to become the emperor's private secretary. He was

welcomed at the court but never forced to be present. Once he declined to leave his farm at the request of Mæcenas. Apparently his patron appreciated his abilities and respected his wishes.

Horace divided his poetry into four groups, *Satires, Epodes, Epistles,* and *Odes.* In the *Satires* he tells how he was annoyed by a bore, how the newly rich sought social prominence, how people gossiped about their neighbors, how he experienced hardships on his journeys, and how he spent his time on his farm. The *Epodes* deal principally with events of the time. The *Epistles* discuss in a somewhat didactic manner literature and philosophy and give practical rules for conducting one's life. Altho many poems in all three groups have fine qualities, few attain the artistic finish of the *Odes.*

The technical perfection of these poems has never been successfully imitated in Latin or in translation. Horace became interested in the mechanics of verse during his early years when he was studying the difficult meters of early Greek poetry. He strove to attain a mastery over these forms and so well accomplished his aim that the *Odes* have remained unique in excellence of form. They touch almost every human emotion: friendship, love, patriotism, joviality, conviviality, and serious reflection. They are, however, frequently conventional without any sincere feeling. Horace's impersonal

tone and facile style were greatly admired in the eighteenth century, when the neo-classicists particularly regarded his principles.

Ovid was about twenty years younger than Horace. He had been trained for an official career but decided to devote himself to poetry. In his *Tristia,* recounting the sorrows of his exile, he calls himself "that playful poet of tender love." His love poems gained him prominence in the literary circle at Rome until 8 A. D., when he was banished to Tomi on the Black Sea. The chief reason for his exile has never been accurately determined. It may have been a political intrigue, for his own statement that he was banished because of a poem seems hardly credible, as the *Art of Love* had been published eight years before. This poem explains the methods of winning and keeping a mistress or a lover. Ovid plainly had a thorough knowledge of the feminine heart.

Perhaps he had gained this insight from experience or observation of love affairs in the frivolous society of the Augustan Age. The poems in the *Amores* relate the progress of such a conventional love affair with a certain Corinna. They are insincere and lack personal feeling, for Corinna is a fictitious person. The *Heroides* contains letters supposed to have been written by women to their absent lovers or husbands.

All these love poems are witty, cynical, and shrewd, but distinctly artificial.

Ovid's narrative and descriptive ability make his *Fasti* and *Metamorphoses* more entertaining than the love poems. The *Fasti* describes the festivals of the first six months of the Roman calendar. It gives us considerable information about Roman customs and beliefs. But the poem which assured Ovid immortality is the *Metamorphoses,* a collection of two hundred and forty-six tales concerning the transformations of persons into various forms. It begins with the creation and ends with the transfiguration of Julius Cæsar into a star. Hence it is a storehouse of such famous Greek and Roman myths as those of Narcissus, Dædalus and Icarus, and Pygmalion. For the poets from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century and for the painters of the Renaissance, the *Metamorphoses* was a source of inspiration. Ovid was an excellent story-teller, but, as Quintilian said, he was "too much in love with his own cleverness."

Very few lyrics written between the first and the fourteenth centuries have any great literary value. The poets imitated the classical authors or composed poems in elaborate verse forms. These were usually conventional in subject matter as well as artificial in style. A few hymns, like Cædmon's in Old English, were inspired by a sincere reverence. In *Widsith, Deor's*

Lament, and *The Seafarer* the wanderings and hardships suffered by the early English are described. They also reflect the hardy spirit and the love for the sea, which urged these adventurers "to fare forth in search of the land of the stranger." The devotion to their lords and homes was another prominent characteristic of these people. In Old English there is practically no love poetry, for the sterner aspects of life occupied their attention. A very fine Middle English poem, *The Pearl,* laments the death of the poet's daughter.

The lyrics of Medieval France were principally love songs composed by the troubadours in Provence or the trouvères in northern France. The troubadour worshiped his lady from a distance in accordance with the rules of courtly love. Often she was another's wife and seldom gave him encouragement. Therefore, he complained about her indifference, pouring out his sighs in most complicated stanzas. These poems were sometimes sung by their authors but more frequently by professional entertainers called jongleurs. Everyone from the kings to the peasants indulged in this delightful pastime, for the poet received many honors.

The minnesingers were as highly esteemed at the various German courts. The most noted, Walther von der Vogelweide, wandered from court to court, entertaining his patrons with love

lyrics or commemorating historical events in his political poetry. Altho Walther followed the conventions, he introduced a national element and some personal feeling. His appreciation for the beauties of nature gives a modern tone to such poems as *Unter den Linden.*

Walther has sometimes been compared with Francesco Petrarch, the master of the Italian sonnet. A sonnet is a poem of fourteen lines with a special rime scheme. Petrarch's sonnets have two sections, an octet stating an idea and a sextet making a direct application to some particular circumstance. The following sonnet, entitled "The Praise of Laura Transcends His Poetic Powers," shows his method:

Ashamed sometimes thy beauties should remain
As yet unsung, sweet lady, in my rime;
When first I saw thee I recall the time,
Pleasing as none shall ever please again.
But no fit polish can my verse attain,
Not mine is strength to try the task sublime:
My genius, measuring its power to climb,
From such attempt doth prudently refrain.
Full oft I oped my lips to chant thy name;
Then in mid utterance the lay was lost:
But say what muse can dare so bold a flight?
Full oft I strove in measure to indite;
But ah, the pen, the hand, the vein I boast,
At once were vanquish'd by the mighty theme!

Altho Petrarch counted among his friends the most renowned scholars and the most powerful

rulers of the time, he found little pleasure in the homage paid to him. The inspiration for his love poetry was Laura, whom he first saw in church at Avignon in 1327. He said, "What little I am, such as it is, I am through her." For twenty-one years he sang her praises or mourned her rebuffs in sonnets, canzoni, madrigali, ballati, and one long poem, *Trionfi.* He wrote in Italian instead of the scholarly Latin so that she might read his poems. At a smile from her, he was inspired with hopes; at a frown, he was plunged into despair.

Laura probably became for Petrarch a symbol for love. His poems resemble the conventional lyrics of the earlier poets with their stock similes and inevitable laments. In one line he expressed the central idea not only of his numerous imitators in every European literature but also of his medieval predecessors: " 'Tis sweet to love and good to be undone."

François Villon might have written that line about his own experiences. Betrayed by a mistress, sentenced to be hanged for his connection with a notorious band of thieves, exiled from Paris several times for his escapades, and imprisoned by the Bishop of Orleans, he led an exciting life. He referred to its most colorful episodes in the *Petit Testament,* the *Grand Testament,* and the various ballades. Villon mastered so completely the form of the ballade with

its recurring rimes and refrain that he could obtain the most varied effects from pathos to terror. By a phrase he suggests a whole scene or depicts a character. In his restricted sphere no writer has ever equaled him altho many have admired the technical versatility of the *Ballade of the Ladies of Former Time* with its exquisite refrain, "But where are the snows of yester-year?"

The first editor of Villon's poems was Clément Marot, the forerunner of the French Renaissance. He gave much attention to clearness in expression and gracefulness in style. Practically all of his poetry reflects the French gaiety of spirit. Hence in many ways he is more typical of his nation than many greater writers. His poems invariably commemorate some special occasion or compliment some person. They became models for the writers of light society verse, who wished to express fluently charming sentiments rather than to present weighty thoughts.

The Pléiade regarded Marot and his followers as uncultured because they were indifferent to the classical forms. The seven men composing this group aimed to raise the French language and literature to what they considered the high level of the classical literatures. Their leader, Pierre de Ronsard, started the movement with his *Odes,* patterned after the Horatian ode. These poems and his sonnets contain many fine

passages, but Ronsard is primarily important because he reformed French poetry by his classical studies. As a poet, Joachim du Bellay was the most accomplished among the Pléiade. His *Sonnets to Olive* and *Les Antiquités de Rome,* the source for Spenser's *The Ruins of Rome,* are the most characteristic works of the French Renaissance.

The Pléiade were severely criticized by François de Malherbe, whose rigid adherence to the rules of regularity in language and meter deprived his poetry of any emotional appeal. For two centuries French poetry was so dominated by these rules that its verses became merely carefully revised exercises. Even André Chénier, guillotined during the French Revolution, was essentially classical. His eclogues, elegies, and odes have the artificialities in style which characterized the imitations of Greek and Latin lyrics. At times, however, he escaped sufficiently from the restricting conventions to infuse his poetry with an original vigor.

With similar aims to those of the French Pléiade, Boscan and Garcilasso attempted in the sixteenth century to reform Spanish poetry by introducing the Italian forms. In their odes, sonnets, and eclogues they imitated Petrarch and the other Italian humanists. This Italian influence upon Spanish poetry was extended by Gongora, who founded the artificial style called

Gongorism. The elaborate constructions, coined words, and absurd tricks of this style make his poetry scarcely more than a clever combination of strange phrases and strained ideas.

The Italian sonnet reached England through the translations and imitations by Thomas Wyatt and Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey. These men were experimenters, trying to adapt foreign meters to English usage. Finally, they developed the Elizabethan sonnet, a poem of four quatrains and a couplet. The verse forms and the conventional phrases, introduced by Wyatt and Surrey from France and Italy, became immediately popular with the Elizabethan poets, who composed sonnet sequences to honor some imaginary or actual counterpart of Petrarch's Laura. Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* and Spenser's *Amoretti* have more poetic qualities than the average sequence, but even they are monotonous because the same idea is repeated again and again.

Spenser also wrote pastorals, hymns, and shorter lyrics. He tried to give *The Shepherd's Calendar* a rustic tone by using obsolete words or phrases from different dialects. The poems are allegorical and sometimes satirical. The *Complaints* and *Colin Clout's Come Home Again* find fault with the attitude of the court toward literature and attack the social customs.

The most discussed sonnets of the Elizabethan

period are Shakespeare's. No one has ever satisfactorily determined whether they are merely conventional poems in a generally popular form or whether they refer to actual experiences in Shakespeare's life. Fortunately, to enjoy their unsurpassed poetic beauty it is not necessary to interpret them. Everyone can appreciate the artistic value of such sonnets as the following:

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.
In me thou seest the glowing of such fire
That on the ashes of his youth doth lie,
As the death-bed whereon it must expire
Consumed with that which it was nourish'd by.
This thou perceivest, which makes thy love more strong,
To love that well which thou must leave ere long.

Shakespeare's plays and those of other Elizabethan dramatists contain many fine songs. The minor poets seem to have had the lyric gift almost in equal measure with the more famous writers. The output was so great that anthologies of the choicest were published as early as 1600. Until the end of the seventeenth century the song-writers continued to enrich English

literature with tuneful lyrics. Some, like Ben Jonson, sought models among the classical poets, while others still followed the traditions of the Renaissance. Professor Schelling has collected the best in his *Elizabethan Lyrics* and *Seventeenth-Century Lyrics*. Among the latter are such well-known poems as Ben Jonson's "Drink to me only with thine eyes"; John Donne's "Hymn to the Father," one of the great poems of religious feeling in the language; George Wither's "The Lover's Resolution"; Robert Herrick's "To Daffodils" and "Corinna's Going a-Maying"; Thomas Carew's "Ask me no more where Jove bestows"; Edmund Waller's "Go, lovely Rose"; John Suckling's "Why so pale and wan, fair lover"; Richard Lovelace's "To Lucasta, going to the Wars," and "To Althea, from Prison"; and John Dryden's "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1687." From this very inadequate list the reader can see that the seventeenth-century lyric expressed every mood from the lightest amorous flirtation to deepest religious devotion.

Milton's early poems were also endued with the lyrical spirit of the century. *The Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity*, *L'Allegro*, and *Il Penseroso* have been universally acclaimed for their restraint and majestic lines. *Lycidas*, an elegy upon the death of Edward King, is the noblest poem of commemoration in the English

language. The sonnets express Milton's Puritan philosophy, which is summed up in the last line of "On His Blindness"—"They also serve who only stand and wait." He believed we are ever in "the great task-master's eye."

Joost van den Vondel is often referred to as the Dutch Milton because he published in 1654 a drama entitled *Lucifer*. Altho he wrote a number of dramas upon Biblical themes and contemporary subjects, he was primarily a lyric poet. He won early recognition in his youth for his satirical lyrics upon current beliefs. Moreover, the choral songs are the most elevated passages in his dramas. His poems deal with religious devotion, children, and nature, for which he had a deeper appreciation than many poets of his century.

A number of English poets in the eighteenth century discovered that nature was more than a background for man. James Thomson was the pioneer among them, for he brought with him from Scotland some verses on nature when he came to London in 1725. His descriptions in the *Seasons* prove that he had observed nature carefully. The poem, however, lacks freshness because of its elaborate classical diction and didactic tone.

This restraint in style also limited Thomas Gray's poems. Despite its many admirable lines, *An Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard*

seems studied, for Gray tried too hard to attain perfection. In spirit, however, he was romantic, since he was interested in the "mute inglorious Miltons," the beauty of natural scenery, and the supernatural elements in the Norse and Celtic legends. *The Bard,* based on a Welsh story, illustrates the conflict of the two natures in Gray. Its theme is romantic, but its form is that of a Pindaric ode. Commenting on this conflict, Matthew Arnold said that Gray was "chilled into silence by an age of prose." It was rather his own scholarly reserve that chilled his poetry.

William Collins treated his subjects in a similarly abstract fashion. As Swinburne pointed out, his odes are extremely musical, but his range is narrow. His poems resemble carefully developed symphonies upon various moods. Collins was a dreamer sensitive to criticism and melancholy by nature. When his volume failed, he threw into the fire a number of unsold copies and wrote little more.

Another poet afflicted with melancholy was William Cowper, who tried several times to commit suicide. His religious experiences tended to deepen this mood, as his hymns "Oh! for a closer walk with God" and "God moves in a mysterious way" indicate. What little happiness he had, came from the quiet evenings he spent with intimate friends at the home of

Mary Unwin in Olney. One of these friends suggested to him the subject of *The Task* and told him the humorous story of John Gilpin. Cowper described in an intimate, personal style the unimportant incidents of his daily life in the country to please himself rather than to gain an audience. Yet this personal attitude has brought him many readers among those who have little interest in poetry.

George Crabbe wrote *The Village, The Borough,* and *Tales of the Hall* in protest against the idealistic pictures of country life in the pastorals and in Goldsmith's *Deserted Village.* He drew his characters and scenes from his own observations as a village curate, emphasizing the hopelessness and grimness of conditions. In fact, his poems are frequently marred by too many realistic details and rough verses. They are original and powerful but not very pleasing.

The most original poems of the eighteenth century are the *Songs of Innocence* and the *Songs of Experience* by William Blake. From his earliest boyhood Blake had lived in an imaginative world. Everything for him had a spiritual significance, which he expressed in mystical poems and vivid engravings. With childlike simplicity he questioned the lamb and the tiger concerning their Maker or related his strange visions. Blake was misunderstood in his own day, but gradu-

ally his tender pathos and marvelous happiness are bringing him recognition.

Everyone knows the lyrics of Robert Burns, the poet of the common man. In the preface to his poems he said he purposed to "sing the sentiments and manners he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language." When he forgot this purpose and tried to imitate contemporary English poetry, he failed. Burns belonged to the Scotch peasantry, whose pleasures he described in *The Cotter's Saturday Night*. From the fields and the taverns he obtained material for such sympathetic and humorous portrayals of this humble life as *To a Mountain Daisy, To a Mouse, Tam O'Shanter,* and *The Jolly Beggars.* He could, however, be satirical when his scorn was aroused. *Holy Willie's Prayer* and *The Holy Fair* ridicule the Calvinism preached by the Auld Kirk because it considered man a lost soul and held continually before him the terrors of Hell.

Burns wrote about three hundred songs ranging from convivial drinking songs to stirring patriotic hymns. Sometimes he revised old songs or used their themes for new poems; more often he composed new songs for old Scotch airs. Their success is due to their simplicity and to their emotional appeal, for Burns aimed to touch the heart in *Auld Lang Syne, Coming through the*

Rye, Sweet Afton, and the numerous other familiar songs.

While these poets were preparing the way for the romantic revival in England, a struggle between classicism and nationalism was taking place in German lyrical poetry. Johann Gottfried Herder contributed to the nationalist movement with his *Voices of the Nations in Songs,* a collection of early lyrics and ballads from many nations. This book aroused an interest in the past by proving to the German people that their folk-poetry compared favorably with that of other nations.

Goethe and Schiller endeavored in their lyrics to reconcile the Greek ideals with the modern spirit. Goethe's *Herman and Dorothea* treats a provincial love story in a classical manner, while Schiller's *To Joy* is an emotional hymn in the form of an ode. The love lyrics and the ballads of both poets often deal with nature or medieval legends in a somewhat freer style, but they are not entirely liberated from a classical restraint or moralizing tendency. Schiller's philosophical lyrics, stating his ideal of ultimate peace through spiritual aspiration, are his finest poems.

Thus during the last half of the eighteenth century new forces were appearing in European literature. These finally brought a complete revolt from classicism both in subject matter and form. The whole spirit of the age had changed.

XXX

THE ROMANTIC REVIVAL

The romantic revival was primarily a movement for freedom of expression in literature. The poets treated their material subjectively and explained frankly their emotional experiences. The characteristics of the movement were a return to nature, a use of the supernatural, a sympathetic treatment of the commonplace, an interest in the medieval legends, a revolt against conventions, and an experimenting with new meters. The finish and exactness of eighteenth-century poetry were severely condemned as coldly artificial. In their attempt to be natural the romantic poets sometimes went to such extremes that their work has little value. But, when they forgot their theories and became inspired by their feelings, they wrote some of the most splendid poetry in all literature.

The romantic movement began in England with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* by Wordsworth and Coleridge in 1798. Wordsworth had been in sympathy with the French Revolution until the reign of terror. The excesses of that period disillusioned him and caused him to despair of mankind. He recovered his faith in man while he was living in the lake country with

his sister Dorothy. Wandering about the country lanes and talking to the peasants, he discovered that simplicity and truth are more valuable than social theories. At this time he met Coleridge, whom he declared to be the only wonderful man he knew. On a walking trip they discussed poetry and decided to publish a volume together. This was the *Lyrical Ballads.*

Wordsworth chose the ordinary incidents of humble life and gave them a spiritual significance. In simple language he described the impressions made upon him by the persons and natural objects he had observed. From the most trivial events he derived some lesson. This moralizing tendency increased so that the poems of his later years are practically sermons. Matthew Arnold selected about one-fourth of Wordsworth's poetry as worthy to be preserved. *Tintern Abbey, Intimations of Immortality, Ode to Duty, Michael,* and the short lyrics are the most characteristic expressions of Wordsworth's faith in nature and the virtue of common man.

Coleridge dealt with the supernatural in such a manner that he made it real. In *Christabel* and the *Ancient Mariner* he created an air of mystery by means of a medieval atmosphere and suggestive descriptions. The effect of the *Ancient Mariner* is spoiled by the moral at the end. Coleridge recognized this fact, for he wrote to

a friend, "Madam, the fault of the poem is that it has too much moral." The magic of his verse is most impressive in *Kubla Khan,* beginning with the sonorous lines:

> In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
> A stately pleasure dome decree:
> Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
> Through caverns measureless to man
> Down to a sunless sea.

Scott is not a great poet, but he rendered romantic poetry an important service by collecting Scotch ballads and publishing them in *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border.* His own poems, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel, Marmion,* and *The Lady of the Lake,* relate stories of the border in an easy but at times monotonous narrative style. This quality, however, brought them considerable popular success with readers who found the other poets of the period too difficult. It is said that Scott stopped writing poetry because his popularity was overshadowed by that of Byron.

Lord Byron was so proud of his aristocratic ancestry that he felt he was conferring an honor upon literature by writing poetry. Therefore, he entitled his first volume, *Hours of Idleness,* which *The Edinburgh Review* criticized harshly but in general justly. Byron replied with his satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers.* Altho these youthful poems have some of

Byron's fire, they did not attract much attention. His fame dated from the publication of the first two cantos of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage,* describing a two-years' trip on the Continent.

In 1816 Byron left England forever on account of the malicious rumors concerning him. After several years of adventures in Switzerland and Italy, he decided to aid the Greeks in their war for independence, but he died of fever before he could distinguish himself in battle. Byron posed as a wicked man because he hated hypocrisy, which he considered to be the dominating trait of society. His stormy passion and injudicious revelations concerning his private life shocked the English. They could not understand a poet who declared that virtue is hypocrisy and that man counted for little in the scheme of the universe. He even told them that Waterloo accomplished nothing. Byron expressed European ideas rather than English ones. Consequently his reputation on the Continent has always been very great, and he has had many followers among the European poets.

His poetry was inspired either by the spirit of adventure or the spirit of revolt against artificiality. He wrote hastily and carelessly but vigorously. The wilder aspects of nature, such as the mountains and the storms, appealed

to him. With enthusiasm he described their grandeur:

> The sky is changed,—and such a change! O night
> And storm and darkness! Ye are wondrous strong,
> Yet lovely in your strength, as is the light
> Of a dark eye in woman! Far along
> From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,
> Leaps the live thunder.

Byron's heroes in the *Giaour,* the *Corsair, Lara,* the *Prisoner of Chillon,* and the other romantic naratives reflect the different sides of his nature. The dramas, *Manfred* and *Cain,* proclaim the Byronic despair and defiance of the world. But all his moods and his complete philosophy are expressed in his masterpiece, *Don Juan.* It is Byron's final revenge upon the society which repudiated him. His statement, "I am of the opposition," might be placed upon the title-page of his volumes to indicate his attitude toward poetry and toward life.

Shelley was another poet of revolt, attempting to liberate the mind from the bonds of convention. He was dismissed from Oxford for writing a pamphlet entitled *The Necessity of Atheism.* He married Harriet Westbrook because he wished to free her from the discipline of an uncongenial home, and he deserted her to run away with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, since he did not believe in the restraint of marriage. Later he was aroused by Emilia Viviani's

imprisonment in a convent to write *Epipsychidion.* Anyone who seemed to be the victim of injustice gained his sympathies.

By the *Revolt of Islam* and *Prometheus Unbound* he hoped to bring about a reform in society so that the individual might have more freedom. He looked upon the Greek War as marking the dawn of a new age. When he discovered that his ideals were unattainable, he was dejected. He was a seeker for an indefinable beauty, or as Matthew Arnold said, "a beautiful and ineffectual angel, beating in the void his luminous wings in vain."

The manifestations of this beauty he found in nature, which inspired such supreme lyrics as *To a Skylark, Ode to the West Wind, The Sensitive Plant,* and *The Cloud.* In his lyrics he endeavored to convey an impression of his visionary world. Hence many of his most beautiful lines are vague and suggestive rather than explicit. Only a poet who had heard ethereal music could write those sublime lines from *Adonais,* an elegy on the death of Keats:

> Life like a dome of many-colored glass
> Stains the white radiance of eternity.

In a letter written to a friend Keats exclaimed, "Oh for a life of sensations rather than of thoughts!" Hence it is not strange that his creed should have been:

> Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
> Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

He found beauty in classical myths, in medieval legends, and in nature. Much of his poetry is pagan in tone, depicting a sensuous mood in colorful and imaginative language. By his masterful word-painting he produced the classical severity of the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* and the medieval atmosphere of *The Eve of St. Agnes.*

Keats had no theories to expound. He merely expressed his feelings about the beautiful things he saw or heard. Even the narrative poems place more emphasis upon the hero's emotions than upon his actions. Perhaps Keats would have followed Shelley's advice to write more seriously, had he lived beyond his twenty-sixth year, for the unfinished *Hyperion* indicates a more thoughtful attitude. The difference between these two poets may be seen from a comparison of Shelley's *To a Skylark* and Keats's *To a Nightingale.* Keats appeals almost entirely to the senses by his vivid phrases, as in the lines:

> Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn.

The music of words had as powerful a charm for Poe. By repetitions and refrains he gained his weird effects. He was a poet of moods, often sad or despairing, as in *The Raven* and *Annabel Lee.* His poems also revealed his passionate de-

votion to beauty, for he believed that poetry should be the "rhythmical creation of beauty." In the *Poetic Principle* he declared that "the value of a poem is in ratio to its exciting element." He was cold and intellectual, carefully planning his poetry to gain this desired effect. Yet his excellence of form and the haunting qualities of his melodies make many of his forty-five poems unforgetable.

The French romanticists criticized Béranger for his adherence to the conventional style. Yet he may be classed with them, since his ballads and popular songs expressed the natural feelings of the common people. His wit, pathos, common sense, and patriotism gained him an enormous audience, chiefly among the unliterary. He was several times sent to prison by the restored monarchy for his political songs, especially those on the Napoleonic legend. He was equally successful in writing a vigorous ballad like *The King of Yvetot* or a sentimental poem like *My Old Coat!*

Lamartine's *Meditations* were more important in French poetry because of their treatment of nature. Lamartine is a sentimentalist following in the footsteps of Rousseau and Chateaubriand. His melancholy tone and tenderness are sincere, but his poetry lacks originality and vigor. He has been read for his melodious verse rather than for his sentiments.

Another poet who anticipated the more pronounced romanticists is Alfred de Vigny. The technical finish of his poems is admirable, but they are somewhat insincere and cold. These qualities, as well as his pessimism, account for his limited appeal.

The leader of the romantic school was Victor Hugo. His dozen successive volumes, beginning with *Odes and Ballads* published in 1826 and ending with *The Art of Being a Grandfather* published in 1881, contain the finest lyrical and narrative poetry in French literature. These poems deal with a great variety of subjects ranging from colorful Oriental tales to simple rustic scenes. They were inspired by Hugo's faith in the goodness of God and his optimistic view of life. "No poet," says Saintsbury, "has a rarer and more delicate touch of pathos, none a more imperious command of awe, of the vague, of the supernatural aspects of nature." Even when he is sentimental and melodramatic, we are impressed with his sincerity.

Two disciples of Hugo are Théophile Gautier and Alfred de Musset. The poetry of Gautier is remarkable for its formal perfection. He had studied art before he had turned to writing, and from that study had acquired a sense of form. One volume he called *Emaux et Camées* (*Enamels and Cameos*), a title suggesting his exact finish. Musset, on the other hand, wrote

very carelessly, giving little attention to diction. He had something of the Byronic passion, which found early expression in his *Tales of Spain and Italy*. His lyrics are characterized by a reflective and rather melancholy tone.

The principal figure among the younger French romantic poets was Charles Baudelaire. He had more in common with Poe, whose works he translated, than with the French poets. His *Flowers of Evil* and *Short Poems in Prose* contain analyses of the less common moods and passions. They are notable for their unconventional treatment of sense impressions and somber thoughts. Hugo said that Baudelaire "created a new shudder."

In Italy the tradition of Petrarch was carried on by Giacomo Leopardi in his patriotic odes. He looked to the past, exclaiming,

> Wake the dead,
> Since the quick sleep; bid the old heroes rise
> And scourge with their tongues, until this vain
> And rotting age, revitalized, shall rush
> To emulate their deeds, or learn to blush.

Altho Leopardi was pessimistic in his view of human indifference, he found, like Wordsworth, comfort in nature. Undoubtedly the fact that he was a secluded invalid affected to some extent his attitude toward mankind.

The leaders of the romantic movement in

Germany also endeavored to revive the glory of the past by their ballads based on folk-lore. Johann Ludwig Uhland's ballads and patriotic songs did much to forward this movement, for he was fired by the nationalistic spirit. But Uhland was soon surpassed by Heinrich Heine, who treated the material more subjectively.

Heine prefaced one of his volumes with the following poem:

> In this volume I have set
> All my anguish, all my fret;
> Open it, and thou shalt see
> All my heart laid bare to thee.

These verses indicate his tendency to emphasize his own unhappiness. Whether he was writing descriptions of natural scenery or retelling an old legend, he was chiefly concerned with his own emotions. Often his lyrics are weakened by an excessive sentimentality or a cynical or satirical line. At times he even ridiculed his emotional reactions in a spirit of irony. Yet he is the most widely-known lyric poet of Germany, because he definitely portrays his feelings. His songs are free from the vague spirituality characteristic of German poetry.

The interest in national origins also inspired the poets in the other countries of Northern Europe. Adam Gottlob Oehlenschläger used the legends of Denmark for his heroic dramas, which

brought him immediate recognition as the greatest Danish poet. In 1829 he was crowned laureate of the Scandinavian countries by Bishop Tegnér. His dramatic poem, *Aladdin,* was attacked by the adherents of the classical school, but Oehlenschläger triumphed over his opponents, as his romantic enthusiasm for the past appealed to his countrymen.

Longfellow wrote in a preface to his translations from Bishop Tegnér's work: "He is the glory and boast of Sweden and stands first among all her poets living or dead." His best-known work is *Frithjof's Saga,* a modernization of an old Scandinavian story. The chief characteristic of Tegnér's poetry is its joyous spirit, which came from his Hellenistic studies.

Tegnér's younger contemporary, Johann Ludwig Runeberg, was a Finn. He chose his subjects from rural Finnish life and treated them realistically. His most famous work is *Ensign Stol's Stories,* containing patriotic ballads and tales of the Russo-Finnish war. His popularity was second only to that of Tegnér.

The national poet of Poland is Adam Mickiewicz. He took the main theme for his *Ancestors* from Lithuanian folk-lore but added personal comments upon Polish history. On account of his activities in politics he was finally exiled. His patriotic poem, *Master Thaddeus,* presents the

finest elements in the Polish character and has been an inspiration to his nation.

The romantic spirit of revolt spread even to Russia, whose greatest poet, Alexander Pushkin, was banished to the Caucasus after he had written some odes extolling freedom. Before his exile from St. Petersburg, he had produced a romantic epic, *Ruslan and Lyudmila,* and some lyrical poetry. The latter is filled with personal feeling concerning his schoolfellows, his adventures in the capital, and his love affairs. Its general tone betrays his French training, for he often idealizes his emotions.

While he was in the Caucasus, he read Byron's poetry. The results of his enthusiasm for the English poet were *The Prisoner of the Caucasus,* patterned after *Childe Harold;* some narrative tales; and *Evgeni Onegin,* a novel in verse, for which *Don Juan* was the model. Another English poet who influenced Pushkin was Shakespeare. *Boris Godunov* is a historical tragedy, derived from *Richard III, Macbeth,* and *Henry IV.*

Pushkin learned from his old nurse many Russian folk-tales. These furnished him themes for poetry and prose tales. In his later period he became more objective and impersonal. His masterpiece is *The Bronze Horseman,* the story of a clerk crazed by the loss of his sweetheart in a flood. This work has been called the greatest poem in the Russian language. Pushkin's direct

and clear style had a very beneficial effect upon Russian literature.

Another Russian disciple of Byron was Michael Lermontov. He also resembled Shelley in his idealism and longing for a congenial world. His failure to realize his ideals made him pessimistic. He is the wanderer who is the chief character of his poem, *The Demon*. The background for many of Lermontov's poems and his novel, *A Hero of our Days*, is the Caucasus. In his psychological study of the Russian soul he anticipated the realistic novelists.

Thus the movement started in England by the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798 spread in different forms throughout European literature. By the middle of the nineteenth century, however, there began a reaction against the subjective method of the romanticists. Preoccupation with personal emotions was replaced in poetry by a consideration for other people. The realistic present and its problems assumed greater interest than the romantic past.

XXXI

POETRY OF THE LAST HALF OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The last half of the nineteenth century was a period of far-reaching political, industrial, and social changes brought about largely by new inventions and by greater facilities for education. It was an age of materialistic development, marked by enormous expansion. Man controlled forces which he had never dreamed existed. New economic theories had to be formulated for the new conditions. But even more important were the scientific discoveries, which threatened all the old beliefs. The confusion resulting from all these changes affected directly or indirectly the poetry of the period.

The appointment of Tennyson as poet laureate upon the death of Wordsworth in 1850 was most appropriate, because he expressed the attitude of the English middle class toward the new developments. In *Locksley Hall* he reviews the social and political conditions and enthusiastically states his faith in the future, when "the federation of the world" shall bring order out of the confusion and "the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law." Tennyson believed that the poet should be a practical guide

for his generation, interpreting life and directing thought by his wise counsels. No matter what his subject might be, he used it to convey a message to his age. *Œnone* and *Ulysses,* for example, are classical only in subject matter. The first teaches the importance of "self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control"; the second stresses the value of an active life.

> How dull it is to pause, to make an end,
> To rust unburnish'd, not to shine in use,—
> As tho to breathe were life!

The *Idyls of the King* is a modernization of the medieval legends for the purpose of teaching morality. Tennyson's knights are Victorian gentlemen, and his Arthur is virtue personified. If the poet had been able to appreciate the medieval spirit, he might have made the *Idyls* a great epic. Instead he weakened the vigor of his source, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur,* by his sentimentalizing.

Tennyson began *In Memoriam* to express his personal grief when his friend Hallam died. This event turned his attention to the question of immortality. The 131 lyrics composing this poem were written during a period of seventeen years, while Tennyson was gradually progressing from religious doubt to the conviction that all creation moves toward God. Because *In Memoriam* gave expression to the religious faith of the age, it became his most popular poem.

Altho Tennyson's philosophy and moral teachings may have little interest for future generations, he will always be read for the beauty of his verse. He was a great lyric artist, taking infinite pains to write perfectly. Even his dullest poems contain musical passages, such as the songs in *The Princess:*

Sweet and low, sweet and low,
  Wind of the western sea,
Low, low, breathe and blow,
  Wind of the western sea!
Over the rolling waters go,
Come from the dying moon, and blow,
  Blow him again to me;
While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps.

As Tennyson taught Victorian England faith, so Browning taught her courage. He was ever a fighter with the firm conviction that victory would be the reward of the brave. His optimistic philosophy that right will finally triumph is the keynote of his poetry. Nowhere has he better stated this philosophy than in *Prospice:*

Fear death?—to feel the fog in my throat,
  The mist in my face,
When the snows begin, and the blasts denote
  I am nearing the place,
The power of the night, the press of the storm,
  The post of the foe;
Where he stands, the Arch Fear in a visible form,
  Yet the strong man must go:
For the journey is done and the summit attained,
  And the barriers fall,

Tho a battle's to fight ere the guerdon be gained,
The reward of it all.
I was ever a fighter, so—one fight more,
The best and the last!
I would hate that death bandaged my eyes, and forbore,
And bade me creep past.
No! let me taste the whole of it, fare like my peers
The heroes of old,
Bear the brunt, in a minute pay glad life's arrears
Of pain, darkness and cold.
For sudden the worst turns the best to the brave,
The black minute's at end,
And the elements rage, the fiend-voices that rave,
Shall dwindle, shall blend,
Shall change, shall become first a peace out of pain,
Then a light, then thy breast,
O thou soul of my soul! I shall clasp thee again,
And with God be the rest!

Browning never attained Tennyson's popularity with his contemporaries because his meaning is not immediately clear. He poured forth his ideas without restraint in a cryptic style. The dramatic lyrics, dramatic romances, and similar poems, in which he deftly depicts a mood or subtly portrays a character, are his best work. The Italian Renaissance, Jewish history, and medieval Christianity furnished Browning with the historical figures for these studies. From his vast reading he acquired a thorough understanding of the times when they lived. Hence he has presented them with rare insight and sympathy. *My Last Duchess, Soliloquy of a Spanish Clois-*

ter, Love among the Ruins, Saul, In a Gondola, Andrea del Sarto, The Bishop Orders His Tomb, Abt Vogler, and *Rabbi Ben Ezra* are excellent examples of Browning's method of using the dramatic monolog. He later employed this form for his long narrative poem, *The Ring and the Book,* which gives an account of a murder from twelve different points of view. His ability in characterization finally won for Browning the consideration he deserved.

For several years before Elizabeth Barrett met Browning she had admired his poetry. This admiration led to a literary correspondence, a meeting, and finally marriage. Inspired by her love for her husband, she wrote her finest poetry, the *Sonnets from the Portuguese.* Her other poetry shows her scholarly attainments and sincere feeling, but is marred by awkward constructions. *The Cry of the Children,* a vigorous protest against the employment of children in factories, brought Mrs. Browning considerable fame because it reflected the humanitarian feeling of the age, which considered her an equal of Tennyson.

Altho Matthew Arnold referred in his essays to political and social conditions, he took the themes for his narrative poetry from the past. Since he had studied the ancient literatures extensively at Oxford, he patterned his poems after the epic and elegy. *Sohrab and Rustum, Balder Dead,* and *Tristram and Iseult* retell in

a restrained classical manner stories taken respectively from Persian folk-lore, Scandinavian mythology, and medieval romance. In such lyrics as *The Buried Life* and *Dover Beach* he regrets the loss of the serene assurance that the past possessed. His poetry has the intellectual qualities of austerity and precision but lacks the ardor of spontaneous emotion.

Edward FitzGerald was also a student of Persian literature, from which he translated so excellently the *Rubaiyát of Omar Khayyám* that it has been considered an original masterpiece. He reproduced perfectly the melancholy tone and sensuous beauty of Omar's verse. The poem's fatalistic philosophy advises enjoyment of pleasure while it lasts, since the future is uncertain.

> Come, fill the Cup, and in the Fire of Spring
> The winter garment of Repentance fling:
> The Bird of Time has but a little way
> To fly—and Lo! the Bird is on the Wing.

The *Rubaiyát* attracted little attention before Dante Gabriel Rossetti and his friends pointed out its fine qualities. Rossetti belonged to the group of painters known as the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood. Their aim was to return to the naturalness of early Italian painting. Consequently color and imagery predominate in his poems. Another quality resulting from Rossetti's admiration of the Middle Ages is the super-

natural element, which gives to his ballads an atmosphere of mystery and to his religious poetry a mystical spirituality. His love sonnets, *The House of Life,* are the finest Petrarchian sonnets in the English language.

William Morris, another member of the Brotherhood, sought to bring beauty into the Victorian home by his designs for furniture, wall-paper, and other house-furnishings. For this purpose he established Morris and Company. His discontent with modern conditions prompted him to make addresses on social problems and to describe a Utopia in his prose romance, *News from Nowhere.* Despite these varied activities he found time to write a large amount of poetry, chiefly on medieval and classical subjects. His *Defense of Guinevere* and *The Life and Death of Jason* show how thoroughly he understood the spirit of the past. His most sustained effort is *The Earthly Paradise,* which contains twenty-four tales from Greek and Northern sources. If Morris had written less with more care, his literary reputation might have equaled that of his two friends, Rossetti and Swinburne.

No other English poet has employed with such perfect success so many different meters as Swinburne. This facility in handling irregular rhythms he acquired from his study of Italian and French poetry. He was an ardent disciple of Victor Hugo, whom he called "the

spiritual sovereign of the nineteenth century." Hence he was devoted to the cause of individual liberty, attacking all restraint. His disregard for conventions and his pagan spirit in *Hertha* and *The Garden of Proserpine* probably prevented his appointment as poet laureate at the death of Tennyson. The earth goddess, Hertha, declares:

> I am that which began;
> Out of me the years roll;
> Out of me God and man;
> I am equal and whole;
> God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily;
> I am the Soul.

Swinburne was a poet of the open air and the sea, for they were to him symbols of freedom. He wrote, "I will go back to the great sweet mother, mother and lover of men, the sea." Often his melodious verses recall the majestic music of the waves or the harmonies of the wind. His treatment resembles that of a musician composing a great symphony.

The Victorian age was shocked at his *Poems and Ballads* but read them with considerable interest because they departed from the traditional forms. Before their publication he had written several dramas, including *Atalanta in Calydon,* the choruses of which had brought him instant recognition as a great lyric poet. That he also had narrative ability is proved by his *Tris-*

tram of Lyonesse, a vivid retelling of an Arthurian romance. Thus Swinburne's versatile genius makes him the last important poet of the period.

With the exception of Whitman the nineteenth-century American poets generally followed the English tradition. Some described American scenes or used local dialects, but they were clearly influenced by their English predecessors and contemporaries in the treatment of their subjects. Their poetry has little originality of thought and few distinguishing qualities. They wrote a quantity of good verse but few superior poems.

The most widely read of these poets was Longfellow, the laureate of the American fireside. *Hiawatha, Miles Standish, Evangeline, The Wreck of the Hesperus,* and the other ballads appealed to his readers because they told pathetic or humorous stories in a simple style. Furthermore, Longfellow's sentimental platitudes and sermons in rime, like *The Psalm of Life,* encouraged his generation with an optimistic philosophy. He also brought the culture and romance of the European literatures to America by his numerous translations, which often surpass his original poems. The most important is his faithful rendering of Dante's *Divine Comedy.* He taught the New England Puritans that the beautiful is not necessarily evil and may even convey a spiritual message.

Whittier wrote his poetry primarily for this purpose. He was a reformer, pointing out the hardships suffered by the poor and endeavoring to arouse the nation to the inhumanity of slavery. He said: "I set a higher value on my name as appended to the anti-slavery declaration of 1833 than on the title-page of any book." In his denunciation of slavery this gentle Quaker was never bitter or tactless like many abolitionists. He was a prophet voicing his righteous indignation against an evil which was threatening the spiritual life of the nation.

His songs of labor and ballads were inspired by his admiration for Burns. He understood the problems and feelings of the humble man almost as well as the Scotch poet, but he did not have Burns's poetic gift. Even *Snow-Bound* has diffuse passages and prosaic lines, altho these faults are overshadowed by the effectiveness of the simple descriptions and natural atmosphere. Whittier stated his greatest handicap when he said, "The gods have made me most unmusical." He might have added that they had also failed to give him a sense of humor.

The only New England poet gifted with this admirable quality was Holmes. In *The Height of the Ridiculous* he tells how one of his poems sent his servant into a fit of hysterical laughter lasting ten days. "And since," he said, "I never dare to write as funny as I can." He wrote about

one hundred and thirty poems for special occasions, such as class reunions or the welcome of visitors to Boston. These are amazingly clever and sometimes mildly satirical. The humor in his well-known poem, *The One Hoss Shay,* is due chiefly to the imitation of the Yankee dialect.

Lowell also used this dialect in his *Biglow Papers,* two series of satires on American politics during the Mexican War and the Civil War. In these witty poems he crystallized the opinion of an influential section of the American public. *A Fable for Critics* contains some interesting comments about contemporary American writers and states his own faults. The most outstanding is his tendency to moralize. *The Vision of Sir Launfal,* for example, preaches the importance of duty. Lowell believed that poetry should have a definite aim and should not be written merely to please the ear with its melody.

Contemporary with these poets but belonging in spirit to a younger generation was Walt Whitman, the prophet and pioneer of free verse. As a printer, carpenter, school-teacher, editor, war nurse in the hospitals, and government clerk he had come into contact with all classes and types. He gloried in his companionship with the laboring man, whom he praised in *I Hear America Singing.* He was the poet of the masses, but unfortunately they found his poetry too difficult to read. His *Leaves of Grass* challenged his gen-

eration by its intense realism and unconventionality to take an original view of American life. He often shouted his message at the top of his voice, for he was determined to be heard in his protest against the falseness in life and literature.

Whitman's poetry is very uneven. Much of it is diffuse and wordy with confusing details and incoherent jumbles of names. Yet at times he wrote most impressively, as in *When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloomed* and *O Captain! My Captain,* the finest tributes to Lincoln in American poetry. Finally the "Good Gray Poet" has received recognition as a sincere and truly representative American poet.

Lanier's *Psalm of the West* rivals Whitman's *Thou Mother with Thy Equal Brood* as an expression of the democratic spirit. Lanier was a Southerner who had a remarkable talent for music. He wrote only a small amount of poetry, but his lyrics entitle him to be considered among the important American poets. Only a sensitive artist gifted with a vivid imagination could produce the beautiful descriptions in *Sunrise* and *The Marshes of Glynn.* The closing lines of *The Symphony* state Lanier's faith:

> And yet shall Love himself be heard,
> Tho long deferred, tho long deferred;
> O'er the modern waste a dove hath whirred:
> Music is love in search of a word.

The French Romanticists were followed by the Parnassians, who emphasized objectivity and the importance of form. Under the leadership of Leconte de Lisle they endeavored to be impersonal and neutral toward their subjects. They frequently took their themes from antiquity, as they scorned the modern era. Thus, José-María de Herédia covers practically the whole historical past in his sonnets, *Les Trophées*. Altho several Parnassians wrote excellent verse, they have been generally surpassed by the Symbolists.

The Symbolists were individualists reproducing their visions in verses freed from all restrictions of form. The recognized leader of the school was Paul Verlaine, who explained his principles in *Art Poétique*. In his early poems he imitated Baudelaire and Leconte de Lisle and in his later volumes wrote some dull poetry, but his lyrical gift and frankness give many poems an original spontaneity.

Stéphane Mallarmé also stressed the value of musical language. Like Poe, whom he translated, he chose words specifically for their effect. The connotation or suggestive quality of words assumed for him major importance. Hence his poetry is often obscure. He said: "To name an object is to suppress three-quarters of the enjoyment of the poem, which consists in the pleasure of guessing little by little. To suggest, that is the dream." He gives impressions rather

than definite ideas. Since he had a retiring nature, his poetry has little contact with life.

In 1884 Verlaine published his *Les Poètes Maudits* to call attention to Mallarmé and especially Arthur Rimbaud. The latter had written a small volume of poetry before he was nineteen, and had then given up literature. During the rest of his life he wandered about the world in quest of adventure. He was a visionary, seeking to penetrate the unknown and recalling his visions in the striking images of *Les Illuminations*. Altho Gourmont dismissed him as a "freak of nature," Rimbaud's genius has been appreciated by a few in every succeeding generation.

The most prominent poet in Italy during the last half of the nineteenth century was Giosue Carducci. He owned his debt to the Italian classics, from which he believed the intellectual heritage of Italy should develop. He detested romanticism as a foreign importation. His lyrics, especially those in *Levia Gravia* and *Odi Barbare,* express his opinions and prejudices concerning politics and religion. His poetry is severe in form, for he was a classicist disdaining the facility and sentimentality of his immediate predecessors.

In the literatures of northern Europe no poet attained particular distinction during this period except the Danish writer, Holger Henrik Drachmann. His chief interest was marine life,

which he had painted before he wrote his poems about sailors and fishermen. As he never ceased to study the sea at first hand, his poetry is realistic and vigorous.

As the nineteenth century drew to a close, poetry became more and more impressionistic. The French poets who succeeded the Symbolists and the followers of Oscar Wilde in England proudly called themselves the Decadents. They were primarily concerned with the expression of their own personalities and sensibilities. They wrote for themselves, caring little whether or not the world was interested in their revelations. As these were somewhat astounding, the Decadents gained a notorious popularity for a time. But their work is too morbid and too artificial to have a permanent appeal.

XXXII

CONTEMPORARY POETRY

THE most striking fact concerning the recent poetic revival is that several poets have become best sellers. The reasons for this success are threefold. In the first place, contemporary poets write naturally, avoiding stilted phraseology and difficult symbolism. They make a definite attempt to be clear and exact in expression even when they employ figurative language. Then, they treat their subjects realistically, whether they choose them from contemporary life or from the past. Finally, they have reflected the modern spirit of restlessness in their freedom from all conventional restraints. They consider any theme and any form suitable for poetry. Hence the twentieth-century poets have brought new vitality to their art.

These new theories, however, had very little effect upon some poets, who continued to write in the older manner. Altho the major portion of Thomas Hardy's poetry was published after 1900, it is in some respects more Victorian than his later novels. The same note of sadness recurs again and again. Hardy finds the misery suffered by man inexplicable; God seems indifferent to humanity. He is a philosophical poet pondering

upon the littleness of man. His great epic drama in one hundred and thirty scenes, *The Dynasts,* portrays the struggle against the Immanent Will. The enormous amount of detail frequently destroys the smoothness and weakens the dramatic power of his verse.

While Hardy observed modern life philosophically, John Masefield actively participated in it. He says in *Biography:*

> By many waters and on many ways
> I have known golden instants and bright days.

When he was working in a carpet factory in Yonkers, he read Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* and decided to become a poet. Like his master, he is a poet of action with considerable narrative and dramatic ability. The sea, rural life, and the unfortunate are his main themes. He states his purpose thus: "I desire to interpret life both by reflecting it as it appears and by portraying its outcome." He accomplished this aim by vivid scenes and impressive contrasts, especially in the narrative poems: *The Everlasting Mercy, The Widow in the Bye-Street, Dauber,* and *Reynard the Fox.* Masefield has also retold the Arthurian legends in *Tristan and Isolt* and *Midsummer Night.* Altho these versions do not have the majesty of the old poetry, they are admirable for their directness. At least he does not modernize the characters in Tennysonian fash-

ion. Masefield's worst faults are his diffuseness and overemphasis on coarseness. He would be a greater poet if he were more restrained and careful. Yet he has served his art well by making poetry popular through his treatment of life as it is.

Another writer who has advanced the cause of poetry is Alfred Noyes. He believes that poetry will dominate the future as religion has dominated the past and as science is dominating the present. Noyes has a rare understanding of human emotions, to which he appeals by his stories of adventure and loyalty. He has recreated the Elizabethan period in *Drake* and *Tales of the Mermaid Tavern*. His ballads are as spirited as their fifteenth-century models. To his contemporaries he exclaims: "O, you have sung a new song, but I will sing an old." He criticizes modern life for its lack of the spiritual element and preaches an optimistic faith. Perhaps he becomes too argumentative and sentimental about the past, but he is a very salutary voice. Furthermore, his long musical lines have caused many readers to appreciate poetry.

Ireland's greatest poet, William Butler Yeats, also found his inspiration in the past. The mysterious elements of the Irish legends exerted a powerful attraction for him. Mysticism is the chief quality of his own lyrics, vaguely expressing in beautiful language his disappointment

and longing. He stands aloof from modern life because it offers so little that satisfies him. All the poets of the Celtic Renaissance have this longing for a more spiritual world. "A. E." (George W. Russell) turned to Eastern Philosophy, and James Stephens to the simple life of children and peasants. They are often sad because they are out of tune with their time.

An English mystic, Walter de la Mare, has stressed the unseen world, for "what we see and hear is only the smallest fraction of what is." In this world, peopled by his imagination, he obtains peace of mind. He describes simply and directly his adventures in his dreamland.

These few poets may be considered representative of modern English poetry. Several others, like Robert Bridges, A. E. Housman, W. H. Davies, W. W. Gibson, and Siegfried Sassoon, have gained more than passing attention. Their best work can be found in the numerous anthologies of contemporary poetry.

Edwin Arlington Robinson's *Tristram* has been praised as the finest poem written in America. It brought him general recognition and caused readers to investigate his other poetry. They discovered that he was a descendant of Browning both in his philosophy and in his treatment of his themes. His characters are frequently failures in the eyes of the world, but from their experiences they have learned valu-

able lessons, which give them an exceptional understanding of life. Robinson is sometimes obscure because he uses an indirect method and concentrates on essentials. He is an objective writer of great restraint. Consequently his analytical studies of individuals, whether they are taken from Tilbury Town or the Arthurian legends, are sincerely profound. Because of his severity he has been called gloomy and cynical. He replies to this criticism: "The world is not a 'prison house,' but a kind of spiritual kindergarten, where millions of bewildered infants are trying to spell God with the wrong blocks."

Disregarding this intellectual confusion, Robert Frost has dramatically depicted the every-day life of the New England farmers. *North of Boston* and *New Hampshire* contain realistic stories told in the common speech without any poetic figures. In his attitude toward nature he resembles Wordsworth, for he interprets with deep insight the manifestations of his rural environment. Frost is a very careful artist, writing with great reserve and concentration. His latest volume, *West Running Brook,* is, like his first, *A Boy's Will,* subjective and lyrical.

One of Frost's early admirers was Amy Lowell, the leader of the Imagists. Besides writing poetry, she has explained the aims which have governed these poets. They are to use the

exact word, to create new rhythms suitable for expressing new moods, to choose freely any theme, to present an image, and to write clearly and concretely. When the conventional forms hampered them, they used free verse or polyphonic prose, based principally upon a rhythmical combination of all the poetic methods of expression. Miss Lowell's poetry has intensity and color. She is concerned primarily with the vivid impressions made upon the senses by the external world. Her own remark about her poetry, "I glare," is an excellent description. Professor Lowes has collected the most characteristic poems from her eleven volumes under the title, *Selected Poems of Amy Lowell.* By her critical papers she gained for American poetry serious consideration both at home and in England. She also introduced the younger French poets to American readers.

In one of these papers she referred to John Gould Fletcher as a "virtuoso of words." By colorful words and phrases Fletcher tries to interpret his moods. One group of poems in *Goblins and Pagodas* he has called color symphonies. He allows his imagination free rein, describing with no attempt at selection whatever it presents to him. The result often confuses the reader, because the words do not have the same significance for him as they had for the

poet. Fletcher has experimented with Japanese verse forms to obtain his suggestive effects.

Some of the most original American poetry has been the work of three poets from Illinois. When Edgar Lee Masters's *Spoon River Anthology* appeared in 1915, it attracted immediate attention by its frankness and cynicism. The 214 epitaphs concisely revealed the tragedies resulting from hypocrisy, hate, greed, and lust in the life of a village. Masters is concerned about how modern ideas are affecting American civilization. He designated *Domesday Book* as a "census spiritual taken of our America." He pessimistically concludes that the age is one of hopeless confusion and waste. Yet he has some hope for the future because mankind is always "climbing to the light." Masters's narrative poetry frequently becomes so verbose and argumentative that it is extremely prosaic as well as boring. When he draws a character or suggests a story in a few lines, he is much more impressive, for he has little chance to philosophize.

Carl Sandburg is a propagandist, shouting about the injustices which modern methods have brought. He always sides with the under dog and with the worker against the capitalist. What he saw during his years as a laborer in towns or in the wheatfields he has powerfully recorded in *Chicago Poems, Cornhuskers,* and *Smoke and Steel.* He uses colloquialisms and slang to give

his poems a realistic atmosphere. He carries on a campaign against cruelty with the ardor of a reformer. Occasionally he speaks in a more restrained voice—when he writes lyrics about nature. But he is primarily the "laureate of industrial America."

Altho Vachel Lindsay has also attacked the evils of contemporary American life, he has chosen as his chief mission the spreading of a gospel of beauty. On several walking tours he read his poems in the villages where he stopped, because he believes that "men may be transformed by their imaginations." He has given directions concerning how his poems are to be sung or chanted, since he writes for the ear. Sound, therefore, plays an important part in his poetry, the effect of which can only be adequately obtained by reading it aloud. When he carries his method to the extreme, he becomes extravagantly melodramatic or sentimental. Such poems, however, as *General William Booth Enters into Heaven, Congo,* and the negro sermons produce a powerful effect if they are read properly. Lindsay has also written some very fine lyrics about the western mountains.

For the younger American poets, among whom are Ezra Pound, Hilda Doolittle, Conrad Aiken, William Rose Benét, T. S. Eliot, and Edna St. Vincent Millay the reader may consult Louis Untermeyer's *Modern American Poetry.* Ade-

quate selections from their works are also given in several other anthologies. Within recent years contemporary American poetry has received much favorable comment because it has assumed a distinct individuality. How justified the enthusiastic praise has been, it is difficult to determine. Originality alone does not insure greatness.

In the use of free verse and polyphonic prose the American poets were following the French. Altho Henri de Régnier used free verse at times, he had an inclination for the classical perfection of form. In some ways he is more akin to the Parnassians than to the Symbolists. Yet he is modern in spirit despite his devotion to antiquity. In his lyrics he writes more personally but still philosophically.

Free verse was the most suitable form for the vivid descriptions of the Belgian poet, Émile Verhaeren. He resembles Walt Whitman in his treatment of the changes brought by the new industrial processes. He realized that the town with its factories was encroaching upon the country. He has painted realistic pictures of Belgian life before the war, but has colored them with his own imaginative vision. Verhaeren is vigorous both in language and in thought, for he is a poet of action.

The rhythmical prose used by Paul Fort for his *Ballades françaises* was the source from which the American Imagists derived their poly-

phonic prose. In this style Fort has drawn excellent portraits ranging from Louis XI to Joffre. He tells his stories effectively, as he knows how to create the proper emotional atmosphere, whether it be humorous or pathetic. Fort's deep love for nature, particularly the scenery around Paris, is evident in the descriptive passages of the poems. Unfortunately, his style has prevented him from obtaining general recognition even in France, altho he has been called the Prince of Poets in the present generation.

Two other contemporary French poets are known at least by name outside of France. They are Paul Claudel, the French Ambassador at Washington, and Paul Valéry. Claudel is a religious poet, preaching the Christian doctrine of self-forgetfulness. Within his scope he takes the whole universe and all time, past and present. From Æschylus and the English lyric poets he has learned an exalted style, which is rare in French poetry. A French critic characterizes his verse as "the most grandiose lyrical transport of our literature." In 1921 Valéry was voted the foremost poet in modern French literature by the readers of the review *La Connaissance*. He deals with the problem of the universal mind, choosing Leonardo da Vinci as his guide. He is a philosophical and intellectual poet, who writes mainly in the classical forms

because he believes that "the greatest liberty springs from the greatest rigor."

The other European literatures have had a similar revival of poetry during the last twenty-five years. In Italy Giovanni Pascoli succeeded Carducci and wrote intensely personal poems about his distressing experiences. His poetry is filled with the minute details which attract a child. He declares that the poet's world is the child's world of external objects. Thus he has depicted very realistically the scenes of every-day life, from the opening of the shutters at dawn to the closing of them for the night. The younger Italian poets have written the "new" poetry after the manner of the French and English poets. Their use of conversational language has been revolutionary, for Italian poetry has long been dominated by a poetic vocabulary.

Spanish and Russian contemporary poetry has not been very extensively translated, because its effect depends so largely upon the use of exact words and musical language. But from the studies of these literatures we may conclude that their poets have considered any subject suitable for poetry and have introduced new rhythms and a more natural vocabulary. The most prominent Spanish poet, Juan Ramón Jiménez, has a particular fondness for sound and color. He is an impressionist, who finds in nature a reflection of his moods. Of Alexander Blok, the most impor-

tant figure among recent Russian poets, Prince Mirsky says: "But great tho he is, he is also most certainly an unhealthy and morbid poet, the greatest and most typical of a generation whose best sons were stricken with despair and incapable of overcoming their pessimism except by losing themselves in a dangerous and ambiguous mysticism, or by intoxicating themselves in a passionate whirlwind."

Unaffected by all these modern movements, Karl Spitteler, the Swiss poet, wrote a long epic about the Greek gods. When his *Olympian Spring* was published in 1910, he was praised as "the greatest German poet since Goethe" and compared with Homer and Milton. He has made the inhabitants of Olympus live again for the modern reader. Furthermore, his poem has the grand style suitable to his subject. In his book of essays, *Laughing Truth*, he has told the secret of his success. It is unremitting industry.

What Spitteler has to say about the future of poetry suggests that this noblest means of man's expression may attain even greater heights. "If my hopes do not deceive me, the world may one day, in favorable auspices, witness the spectacle of poets who will rival the fertility of the great painters and composers." The attention accorded to contemporary poetry should encourage young poets to accept this challenge.

XXXIII

EASTERN LITERATURE

The ideals and forms of the Eastern literatures are so different from those of the West that a brief consideration of them has been reserved for a separate chapter. All the great religions have come from the East, and the writers of that part of the world are generally philosophical and often mystical. Contemplation and meditation receive a greater emphasis than active participation in affairs. The tales teach ethical lessons, and the poetry expresses longing for a peaceful existence. The Easterner has always been conscious of the unseen world, manifestations of which he has found in nature as well as in his own soul.

After the eighteenth-century European authors became acquainted with these literatures, scholars made translations of the more famous books, such as the *Arabian Nights*. Not until the last fifty years, however, have extensive studies of them been made. The political importance of the Far East within the last decade has greatly increased the interest in Oriental ideas. To understand these peoples we must know their writings, dating from the time when Western civilization was in its infancy.

The book which has most profoundly influenced this civilization and inspired more great music, art, and literature than any other one volume was produced during several centuries in Palestine. It is the Bible. The Old Testament was written originally in Hebrew and the New Testament in Greek. The first part, together with the Apocrypha not included in the Protestant Bible, records the legends, laws, history, prophecy, customs, proverbs, and poetry of the ancient Jews from the creation to the time of Christ. The second contains four versions of the life of Christ, an account of the early church, twenty-one letters ascribed to Paul, Peter, and John, and The Revelation, a vision of the second coming of Christ. Because the Bible has been for nineteen hundred years the religious textbook for Christianity, its stories and teachings are so well known that no comment concerning them is necessary. Its phrases have become the common property of all nations, so that persons who seldom read the Bible quote from it without knowing the source of their words. Fortunately for us, an English translation was made by seventy scholars during the reign of James I, when the English language possessed the qualities suitable for reproducing the dignity and sonorous beauty of the original. Modern translations may be more accurate, but they will

never surpass the authorized version in faithfulness to the spirit.

Reverence for the Bible as an inspired book has prevented many from considering it as they would other literature. Some passages, like the genealogies, are extremely dull; others are masterpieces in characterization and dramatic narrative, such as the book of Job; while the poetry of the Psalms and Song of Songs attains at times the most exalted emotional expression.

The laws and customs given in the Old Testament are explained in the *Talmud.* The rabbis who wrote this book have also included many traditions handed down orally from the time of Moses. Its twenty volumes are, therefore, a complete exposition of Judaism. A large portion of Jewish literature has been devoted to a scholarly interpretation of its teachings.

The doctrines of Mohammedanism were collected by the founder's disciples in the *Koran,* written in Arabic. Mohammed was supposed to have dictated at various times these revelations from heaven. Carlyle praised the *Koran* for its sincerity but criticized it as "a wearisome confused jumble." The endless repetitions make even the narrative sections very tedious reading.

All Arabian literature, however, is not so serious or didactic. The English title—*The Arabian Nights' Entertainment*—indicates the chief quality of *The Thousand and One Nights.* The stories

told by Scheherezade to save her head have delighted many readers by their humor, variety, and suspense. "Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves," "The Adventures of Sinbad," "Aladdin and His Lamp," and the experiences of the good Caliph, Haroun-Al-Raschid, still retain their magical charm for adults as well as for children. *The Arabian Nights* gives a colorful and detailed picture of life in the Orient.

Some of Scheherezade's tales had their origin in Persian folk-lore. About 1000 A. D. Firdusi brought together these legends in his very long epic, *Shāhnāma* or *Book of Kings*. From this poem Matthew Arnold took the material for *Sohrab and Rustum*. English readers have also become acquainted with Persian lyric poetry through FitzGerald's adaptation of the *Rubaiyát*, already mentioned in a previous chapter, and Edwin Arnold's version of part of Saadi's *Gulistán* (*Rose-Garden*). More recently Saadi's *Būstān* (*Fruit-Garden*) and the more joyous poetry of Hāfiz have been translated. The philosophical element in Persian poetry never becomes profound enough to detract from its sensuous beauty.

Edwin Arnold also directed attention to the Hindu philosophy by his *Light of Asia*, which deals with the life and teachings of Buddha. Since Buddha's time, about five hundred years before Christ, the literature of India has been

greatly influenced by his doctrines, based on the brotherhood of man. But in Sanskrit there exists a much older literature dating from 1500 B. C. The religious precepts of the *Rig-Veda* and the later vedas have never been wholly superseded as guides for conduct. About 300 B. C. the national epics, the *Māhabhārata* and the *Rāmāyana,* were composed. Like all Oriental epics, they are filled with strange and exaggerated but often very impressive episodes. The drama is represented in Sanskrit literature by the *Sakuntala,* the chief work of Kālidāsa. It has recently been published in Everyman's Library.

The Western mind has found the literatures of China and Japan even more difficult to understand and appreciate. The elusive quality of the Chinese lyrics and the mysticism of Oriental philosophy appeal chiefly to a contemplative people. The Western world has been too much in a hurry to sympathize with the calm attitude of such teachers as Confucius. In the fifth century B. C. this great sage preached moderation and humility with the purpose of showing people how to live peaceably with their neighbors. His disciples wrote down his sayings, which became the basis for the Chinese classics. Confucius also rendered a valuable service to Chinese literature by collecting the ancient poetry.

The golden age of Chinese poetry was the

eighth century A. D., when Li Po, Tu Fu, and Po Chu-i wrote their exquisite lyrics. Translations from these have been made by Arthur Waley in *The Temple* and by Witter Bynner. They have the qualities we have come to associate with Chinese porcelains and ivories. With a delicate touch the Chinese poets convey the mysteries and beauties of nature.

The classics in Japanese literature were derived from China, but the lyrics reflect the spirit of the land of flowers. The poets evolved two simple forms, the *tanka,* containing five lines and thirty-one syllables, and the *hokku,* consisting of three lines and seventeen syllables. Lafcadio Hearn, who wrote several books about Japan and translated some of its poetry in his *Japanese Lyrics,* says: "The Japanese poem seems to me exactly the Japanese colored print in words—nothing much more." The two most important poets, Hitomaro and Akahito, lived in the eighth century. The American poet, John Gould Fletcher, has imitated them with considerable success in *Japanese Prints.*

Japan has also a national drama, the *No.* These plays treat historical themes in a dignified manner and have brought fame to several actors. They have, however, been forced to share their popularity with the realistic plays based on Japanese life. A few years ago Arthur Waley began the translation of an extremely long novel,

written by a woman named Murasaski about 1000 A. D. It is a detailed account of the love affairs of Prince Genji and gives an intimate picture of court life. Since Japan has assumed a prominent place in contemporary affairs, she may have a literary revival equaling in importance that of the eighth to tenth centuries but very different from it.

The various agencies which are bringing all parts of the world nearer together are bound to have an effect upon literature. They facilitate the interchange of ideas; they permit more extensive travel; and they create a more widespread interest in other peoples. These new conditions do not necessarily mean that literature will become international. Authors will probably still obtain their inspiration from their national cultures, but they will have a broader outlook. Furthermore, they will be encouraged by the possibility of reaching a much larger audience. The numerous translations in all languages indicate that within recent years the demand for books from foreign literatures has greatly increased. It is significant that Bernard Shaw's latest play, *The Apple Cart*, was first performed in Warsaw, Poland. Eastern literature is also receiving its share of the general attention. This universal interest is gratifying because a mutual appreciation of their literatures will bring a better understanding between nations and races.

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